# INSIDE KASHMIR

PREM NATH BAZAZ

# INSIDE KASHMIR

by

PREM NATH BAZAZ

FIRST EDITION

SRINAGAR

THE KASHMIR PUBLISHING CO.

1941

*Printed by S. A. Latif, Mg. Proprietor, Lion Press, Lahore and published by Prem Nath Bazaz for the Kashmir Publishing Co., Srinagar.*

# CONTENTS

# PREFACE

This book is different from so many that have been written on Kashmir. It is not a globe-trotter's book; it does not describe Kashmir as a sportsman's paradise or as an ideal 'beauty spot.' It is not a delineation of the natural beauty of the 'Happy Valley,' enlivened by funny character-sketches of 'Hatos,' as the Punjabi likes to call Kashmiri coolies, or by anecdotes about an interesting trek. Nor, in order to make it readable and amusing enough, have I strung half-truths in a book on "Mother Kashmir" or "Kashmir in Sunlight and Shade."

My aim in writing this book has been to explain the general economic and political conditions of the people of Kashmir; to tell the truth about certain recent doings; and, in particular, to give a succinct account of the political incidents of 1931 with those preceding or succeeding them against their historical background and with reference to the larger context of contemporary events in India and the world. I have tried to understand the problem of the masses and the minorities of Kashmir and have described the part

played by the different communities and their leaders in making recent history.

I have verified every statement of fact made in the book, and tried to be fair to everybody, while expressing my own opinions clearly and frankly. Where I have disagreed with the Government or other political workers I have put their viewpoint in their own words as far as possible. I should feel really very unhappy if I have inadvertently caused pain to any person or party by an inaccurate statement.

The publication of the book would have been difficult but for valuable help received from many friends who supplied me with documents relating to the past history of Kashmir. To all of them I offer my heartfelt thanks. My special thanks, however, are due to two of my esteemed friends who read the manuscript before it went to the press, but whose modesty prevents me from mentioning their names. I must also thank Messrs. Dutta and Co. for permission to use one of their photographs for the cover design.

The title of the book is frankly borrowed from very famous books with which mine can claim no comparison. It is suitable too in the sense that I have not included in the book those Kashmiris who have left the country and settled *outside* it.

May 2, 1941. PREM NATH BAZAZ

# CHAPTER I

## A Glimpse of Past History

Foreigners have adversely criticised Indians for neglecting to preserve a connected record of their past history. Ancient Hindus are not considered good historians. There is a paucity of historical material relating to the Hindu Period in almost all parts of India. Happily this is not the case with the ancient land of Kashmir. A faithful record of her past has been preserved in a famous book entitled the *Raj Tarangini* (River of Kings) by the reputed historian Kalhana, who lived in the first half of the twelfth century A.D. Kalhana is not the oldest known historian of Kashmir. Among his predecessors to whom he is obviously indebted for much of the material used in the *Raj Tarangini* are Helaraja, who flourished in the eighth century A.D., Ratnakara who lived in the reign of King Avanti Varman (872—900 A.D.), and Kshemendra of the time of King Kalasa (1063—89 A.D.). There have been others of lesser importance whose books have little historical value. According to the *Raj Tarangini* there existed no recognised form of Government in Kashmir till 2180 B.C. There was no king and the people enjoyed a

communal life as in the rest of the world before civilisation made its appearance. In 2180 B.C. Raja Daya Karan determined to establish a kingdom in the happy valley. In this he proved successful. Thus were laid the foundations of a monarchical system of government.

The Hindu kings ruled over Kashmir for over four thousand years. During this long period of history twenty-one dynasties rose to power one after the other. In his famous work Kalhana has briefly narrated, in Sanskrit verse, the main episodes in the career of hundreds of kings who ruled over Kashmir during this long period of her history. Most of what he has written regarding the earlier period of history appears to be conjectural. His dates are doubtful. The narrative is also very vague and disappointingly brief. But that part of it which relates to the centuries nearer his own times are reliable and give us a glimpse of the political and social conditions of those days.

After Kalha'na the work of writing history was continued. In the time of King Zain-ul-Abidin (1420—70 A.D.) Jona Raja and Mulla Ahmad brought down the narrative to their own day in Sanskrit and Persian respectively. The task was taken up again by Srivara in 1486 A.D. by Prajya Bhat in the time of Akbar in 1575 A.D., by Haider Malik in 1659 A.D., by Narain Kaul in 1710 A.D., by Mohammad Azam in 1747 A.D., and by Birbal Kachru in 1850 A.D. The work was finally completed for us by many modern writers, notably Pirzada Hasan, Prakash Ram, Pandit Hargopal Kaul, Munshi

Mohammad-ud-Din Fauq and others. Among the latter-day chronicles, that of Pirzada Hasan is the most authentic and that of Haider Malik, a partisan writer, the least trustworthy.

It is not possible for us to describe precisely the social or economic condition of the people of Kashmir during the earliest part of the Hindu Period beyond the fact that the government was an absolute patriarchy : and if the Raja was a benevolent monarch, people enjoyed a prosperous time; but when a tyrant happened to ascend the throne, they suffered heavily. There has been no dearth of bad kings in the history of Kashmir, nor of well-intentioned and noble monarchs. It is not within the scope of this volume to survey and discuss all the historical persons who have from time to time moulded the destinies of the people of the happy valley, but it will not be amiss if some of the very prominent ones are mentioned in passing.

Among the Hindu kings of the earlier period the notable names are those of Meghavahana (1—35 A.D.) Jayananda (582—616 A.D.), Jayapida (764—797 A.D.) and Avantivarman (872-900 A.D.) who, by their brilliant achievements in maintaining internal peace and continued prosperity of their subjects and by military exploits outside home, brought great fame to their country. During the long reigns of these monarchs, Kashmir had the good fortune to make all-round progress; the people were happy, the land and its simple arts flourished. The name of King Vinayaditya (407—540 A.D.) shines by itself. He was a saintly

monarch and a "Philosopher-King." Before ascending the throne he had been trained in the school of oriental simplicity under the care of a saint. When he was approached by the people to accept the throne which had been vacated by his father, he accepted it on several conditions, chief among them being that no one should utter a lie or kill a living being or deceive his fellow-countrymen. He built a small hut at the foot of Shankaracharya hill which became his residential quarters. Adjacent to it he got two godowns constructed in which landlords belonging to the *Kamraj* (North Kashmir) and *Maraj* (South Kashmir) were asked to store voluntarily one-tenth of the produce of their lands, the share that was considered customary revenue belonging to the State. He had no use for Government officials as he entirely depended on the good sense and honest dealings of his subjects. He, therefore, dispensed with the services of them all. He had to retain his army only for defence against foreign aggression. He appointed his brother to look after it and handed over the key of one godown to him. Vinayaditya would distribute the contents of the other godown to the needy in the morning every day. He led a very simple life himself and lived on his own earnings by cultivating a piece of land which he had reserved for the purpose at a little distance from his hut. He was scrupulous enough to put his $\frac{1}{10}$ of produce in the godown as did the other landowners in the country.

The centuries that have elapsed have not obliterated the name of Vinayaditya from the memory of

the people and when something unusually good happens such as can belong only to a golden age, it is customary to say that Vinayaditya's days have returned.

The most famous of the kings of Kashmir in those earlier days was Lalitaditya, known also as Muktapida (715—752 A.D.). He was an ambitious monarch. When he succeeded to the throne, Kashmir was in a disorderly condition as the result of misrule and maladministration of his brother. After having restored peace in the country, Lalitaditya started on a conquest tour of the whole of India. He subdued all the kings he fought with and brought almost the whole of the northern India under his sway. Not content with this he went beyond the boundaries of Bharata Varsha through Afghanistan and subdued Turkey and a part of Central Asia and returned by way of Tibet to his native land after 12 years' absence. Alberuni, the famous Muslim traveller, records that the Kashmirians of his time celebrated annually a certain day as festival in commemoration of Lalitaditya's victories. Lalitaditya was a great statesman, and has left behind a sort of instrument of instruction on the art of governance for the rulers of Kashmir. These suggestions, not advanced when compared with modern principles of statecraft, convey an idea of the keen insight which that great monarch possessed.

There were bad Hindu kings as well. Kalhana mentions many instances of rulers who proved a source of misery for the people. No crime was too

heinous for them to commit. Some of them were dethroned and punished for their misrule while some others had to be tolerated till death took them away.

It is not an easy task to state correctly the social and economic condition of the people of Kashmir during those earlier days. The available historical material on this subject is so meagre that nothing can be stated with certainty. Yet some facts may be gleaned and conclusions drawn with some degree of fairness from what Kalhana and his successors wrote in their chronicles.

It is obvious that the lives led by Hindu kings were, generally speaking, very simple. Most of them were unostentatious and had very few wants. Unlike the absolute monarchs of the mediæval times, they lived among their subjects as heads of families and shared their weal and woe. Their economic and social lives were not far removed from those of ordinary men. They were accessible to the humblest of their subjects and *hauteur* of royalty did not keep them aloof. They were in the habit of moving frequently among their people. Hiuen Tsiang, the Chinese traveller, who visited Kashmir in the regin of Durlabh Vardhan (617—53 A.D. found the people prosperous and peaceful. He tells us that all adjacent territories on the west and south were subject to the sway of kings of Kashmir.

It is remarkable that in the discharge of their public duties the queens of Kashmir took an equal and enthusiastic part. As a matter of fact some of them achieved great fame by their heroic deeds done

to serve the cause of the people of the land. One of them Didda Rani (998—1017 A.D.) was the undisputed queen of her realms when the mighty conqueror Mahmud Ghaznavi came to invade Kashmir but had to return greatly disappointed and dejected.*

Although it is true that during those ancient times when, beyond the produce of land, scarcely any wealth existed and consequently no classes in the modern sense had yet developed in society, yet it cannot be denied that a class of people whose voice influenced the kings and directed their actions had come into being. From time to time they were exploiting the masses to serve their ends and the kings had to be cautious not to incur their displeasure. Brahmins as elsewhere in India were an important part of this class. Many undesirable kings were removed or made to abdicate. As soon as a king had become unpopular in the eyes of the people, rebellions were organised and the kings made to feel the force of public opinion. Many sections of masses took prominent part in such risings. Damars, Tantriyas and Nyayaks had made themselves particularly notorious for their intractability. It is doubtful whether these rebellions were always in the interests of the masses, and whether the aristocracy sometimes did not use them for their own good. Anyway the fear of these risings appears to have produced a healthy and wholesome check on the kings.

---

*In a booklet " Kashmir-ki-Raniyan " Fauq has briefly described the achievements of 18 Hindu queens of Kashmir.

The economic life of the people must have been very simple. As stated already, land was the sole means of production: there were hardly any industries. Cultivators had to pay one-tenth of the produce of their land to the Government as revenue. No other taxes were levied.

In spite of the simplicity which characterised their economic and social life, the people were advanced culturally. There was scarcely a branch of learning which they had not studied and, in many cases, the results shown were marvellous. In philosopy, religion, medicine, sculpture, astronomy, literature, engineering, and in many other walks of life their progress was striking enough even for the modern age. They wrote numerous books on various branches of knowledge, but only a few are extant. Among the few works that have been preserved mention may be made of some important ones to give the reader an idea of our cultural past.

We of the present generation can and should take legitimate pride in the fact that our earlier ancestors evolved a philosophy of their own markedly different from the Vedantic philosophy—profound and popular. This philosophy known as Kashmir *Shaivism* or the *Trika* philosophy is characterised by absolute monism, depth of thought and originality, which have been universally acknowledged. It is an idealistic philosophy unrelenting in its analysis and logic, but does not shirk the realism, the objective reality of the world. Nor is it black magic, sacrificial ritual, or what may be called a "fleshly school" of philosophy. It was only recent-

ly that the philosophical literature of *Shaivism* has been brought to the notice of the Western World by the efforts (not always satisfactory and enthusiastic) of the State Research Department. It is now attracting the attention of many eminent scholars and thinkers, some of whom consider it more synthetic and profound than all other known works on religious philosophies of the world. The school of *Shaivism* was first founded by Vasugupta in the eighth century A.D. who wrote *Spanda Karika*, an important book on the subject. He was followed by Kallata Bhat in the ninth century who wrote *Spanda Vritti.* Soon after came Somananda, a great genius with his profound treatise *Shivadrishti.* Utpala Deva, whose books *Pratyabhijna* and *Stotravali* are given a place of authority on the subject, lived in the tenth century. The most versatile enchanting and prolific author on *Shaivism* is Abhinava Gupta, who flourished during the reign of the Guptas about the end of the tenth century. He has written many books besides the famous *Tantraloka*, a dazzling philosophical work. Other important writers on the subject were Kshemendra, Kshemaraja, and Yogaraja. The last named lived about 1100 A.D. and is the author of a distinguished work, *Paramarthasara.*

Works on literature are numberless. But among the important ones mention may be made of Bhima Bhatta's *Ravanarjuniya* (700 A.D.) ; Damodara Gupta's *Kuttini Mata* (760 A.D.) ; Kshirasvami's Lexicon (800 A.D.) ; Ratnakar's *Haravijaya* (850 A.D.); Sri Swami's *Kapphanabhyudaya* (850 A.D.);

Valabha Deva's commentaries on Kalidasa's works (900 A.D.); Kshemendra's *Desopadesa* (975 A.D.); Soma Deva's *Kathasaritsagara* (1000 A.D.), a monumental work on fiction which has been translated in parts into many languages; Bilhana's *Vikramankadeva Charita* (1100 A.D.); Mankha's *Sri Kantha Charita* (1160 A.D.) and Jayadratha's *Haricharita Chintamani* (1200 A.D.).

The great Patanjali was, according to some scholars, born in Kashmir before the dawn of the Christian era. Besides him other grammarians have flourished in the valley, notable among whom were Chandra in the second century A.D., Kshira Swami and Vamana in the reign of Jayapida (774—808 A.D.), and Kayyata (950 A.D.), who wrote the *Laghuvritti*.

Many books have been written by distinguished authors on *Alankara Shastra* (poetics). Such, for instance, are Vamana Bhatta's *Kavyalankara*, (750 A.D.), Rudratta's *Sringaratilaka* (825 A.D.), Ruyyaka's *Alankarsarvasva* (1125 A.D.) and Mammata's *Kavyaprakasha* (1150 A.D.).

Two famous writers on medical science who flourished during the Hindu Period were Charaka and Narhari. Charaka's book on medicine and surgery is world-famous.

Astrology has been a special study of Kashmir Brahmins. The works of Bhaskaracharya, Aryabhatta and Ratna-Kantha are quoted as authorities on the subject among modern Indian astrologers. The well-known book on sex, *Koka Shastra*, was the result of great labours of Premier Koka Pandit, who lived in the reign of the Lodhis. Another book of

great value on the art of love, written earlier by King Vasunand in the fourth century, is *Kamashastra*. And lastly I may mention two books on politics whose eminent authors Ram Chandra Bhatta and Ananda flourished in the twelfth century A.D.

An estimate of the progress achieved in sculpture and engineering during the Hindu Period can be formed by witnessing some of the ancient temples and other monuments, ruins of which exist at different places all over the valley. The ruins at Martand, Avantipura, Pattan and Wangat (Naran Nag) have an awe-inspiring massiveness of structure and a nobility of architectural design. Hundreds of exquisitely carved stone images which have been unearthed from time to time and are now lying in the premises of the State Museum at Srinagar speak highly of our ancient art of sculpture. The same may be said about bronze work. A big bronze plate with intricate designs and images probably cast in the eleventh century was lately found in Devasar in the Kulgam Tehsil. Recently a large number of tiles has been excavated near Harwan, a place eleven miles from Srinagar. These go to prove that it was not at stone carving alone that the ancients tried their hand and achieved remarkable success. They knew many other arts and developed them to a great degree. The feat of engineering that erected the temple at Martand with its massive columns is marvellous. On looking at such awe-inspiring monuments one often wonders what the men were like who erected these gigantic structures, what their thoughts were and what their outlook on life.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century political changes of far-reaching importance came over Kashmir. Changes there used to take place every now and then which affected the lives of the people; but this change was of altogether a different character. In 1324 A.D. Rentchen, a Tibetan Prince, who had fled from his own country and had taken shelter under the King of Kashmir for several years, took advantage of the times which had become unsettled owing to the fierce depredations of Tartars under Zulqader Khan and murdering the Prime Minister Ram Chandra, took the reins of Government into his own hands in the absence of the King who was in Kishtwar. Subsequently Rentchen, who was a Buddhist by birth, embraced Islam. His glory was short-lived but after him the throne of Kashmir passed into the hands of the rulers who were alien in birth and alien in culture.

The Muslim Sultans of Kashmir occupied the throne for more than two centuries and a half. The most remarkable, popular and famous of them all was Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, who ruled the country most efficiently from 1420-70 A.D. His predecessor Sultan Sikandar had made himself despicable by his religious fanaticism and persecution of Hindus. It was during this period that thousands of Pandits left Kashmir and settled outside in the Punjab and United Provinces to escape the tyranny of Sikandar and other Sultans like him. Sikandar razed as many temples to the ground as he possibly could and broke the images they contained. He is therefore known to history as Sikandar Butshikan or

the iconoclast. Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin was entirely different from him. He was brave, generous, large-hearted, kind and just. He was a lover of art and respected men of learning. He introduced many industries in Kashmir, notably paper-making, sericulture and shawl-manufacture. He became very popular among Hindus for his unexampled tolerance and earned the name of Badshah (the Great Monarch).

There lived a great Pandit in the time of Zain-ul-Abidin whose name deserves to live for ever. His name was Shari Bhat or Shri Bhatta. The King was suffering from a boil which baffled all the physicians but was successfully treated with the wonderful ointment supplied by Shri Bhatta. This pleased the sovereign, who commanded Shri Bhatta to ask for any royal favour, which would be granted then and there. But the great Pandit would have nothing for himself and the various boons asked for and granted were meant to help the persecuted community of Brahmins to live peaceful lives.

Akbar conquered Kashmir in 1586 A.D. During his time and the reign of other Mughal Emperors, who succeeded him, the valley was ruled by Governors appointed by them from time to time. Peace and order were restored to a large extent in the happy valley during the Mughal occupation of the country. But as soon as the influence of the central authority at Delhi declined after the death of Aurangzeb, times became unsettled again.

In 1750 A.D. Ahmad Shah Durrani invaded

Kashmir and conquered her. Thus did the country pass into the hands of the Afghans. They did not give a good account of themselves but proved extremely intolerant and wicked. For about three quarters of a century while the Afghans occupied Kashmir the people had to suffer the harshest government. Shocking tales of religious persecution, devastation and rapine during this period are still commonly told in every household in Kashmir. Many Pandits who could not bear the tyranny and persecution left Kashmir during the Pathan Rule. Though the brunt of the brutal treatment had obviously to be borne by the Hindus the Kashmir Muslims too did not live a happy life under the Afghans. When the rulers of the country are more interested in spoliation, plunder and extortion than in the well-being of the people, no section of the public can remain unaffected by their misrule.

In 1819 a few of the persecuted Pandits under the leadership of Pandit Birbal Dhar, a dignitary and courtier, invited Maharaja Ranjit Singh to help them out of their miserable plight. It is significant that the Pandits who had to run away under cover of night and in disguise were helped by Muslim countrymen in these designs unmindful of the consequences that would ensue. The ambitious Sikh Maharaja seized the opportunity which offered itself and sent his troops under the command of Raja Gulab Singh. Though they had failed in a similar attempt on the valley in 1814 A.D., the Sikhs succeeded in wresting it from the Pathan Rulers

in 1819. The Afghan Governor was defeated and the Kashmiris got new masters from the Punjab.

From 1819 to 1846 Kashmir remained under the Sikhs. But this change of hands did not improve the lot of the people. Maharaja Ranjit Singh and other Sikh rulers who succeeded him had neither time nor inclination to look into the internal administration of the country. They deputed Governors to rule in their name. The last two Governors were Muslims (an interesting point), Sheikh Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din and his son Sheikh Imam-ud-Din. "The Sikhs looked upon Kashmiris as little better than cattle," wrote William Moorcraft, who visited Kashmir in 1824. "The murder of a native by a Sikh was punished with a fine to the Government of from sixteen to twenty rupees of which four were paid to the family of the deceased, if a Hindu, and two, if he was a Mohammadan." Moorcraft found that everywhere the people were in a most abject condition, "subjected to every kind of extortion and oppression.*

Reviewing the period under Muslims and Sikhs, we find that during the larger portion of this period unsettled times prevailed and the country could not make the progress it was entitled to. As already stated, some Sultans, notably the greatest of them all, Sultan Zain-ul-Abidin, and the Mughals brought back as much peace and prosperity to the country as they could. Akbar built the wall round Hari Parbat. Jehangir and Shah Jehan were very

*Travels in the Himalayan Provinces, etc. 1819-1825 Vol. II, page 294.

fond of the valley and paid frequent visits to it. They built stately houses, laid out various pleasure gardens and planted *chinar* trees all over the country. Some of these gardens round Dal Lake are a standing monument of their good work. It cannot, however, be denied that during the reign of many Sultans misrule and maladministration were rampant for most of the time. People were persecuted for their religious beliefs, their lives were in danger and their property was unsafe. In the Pathan and Sikh times taxation was exorbitant and corruption was universal. According to Moorcraft, less than one-sixteenth of the cultivable area was under cultivation. Villages were deserted by impoverished cultivators owing to the grinding taxes, and ruined hamlets could everywhere be seen. There was no knowing what would be in store for the people in future. So capricious and whimsical were the kings.

Bernier, who visited Kashmir during the reign of Aurangzeb, was pleased with the conditions that were prevailing then. He pays a tribute to the industrious habits of the people and is impressed with the grandeur of the Mughal gardens. Shawl industry had already developed and become an important industry of the country. He mentions the prodigious quantity of shawls that was being manufactured in those days.

While discussing the period during which the Hindu kings ruled over Kashmir, we said that many of them misbehaved and tyrannised over their people. A few of them were so un-

scrupulous that nothing was sacred in their eyes. They did not hesitate to lay hands upon the property of their subjects or violate the honour of women. The treatment of a few of them even towards their own parents was most disgraceful. They were corrupt and debauch and had no regard for any moral principles. Similar was the case with many Muslim rulers. It is wrong to believe that the whole Muslim community persecuted the Hindus during the Mohammadan Period. It is unjustifiable to say that Islam or the Muslim community as a whole was responsible for this persecution, tyranny and injustice. From available historical facts it is obvious that whenever a wicked king ascended the throne, the whole country had to suffer. No section of the people could escape the effects of the misrule. While it is true that on various occasions the Hindus were specially chosen for ill-treatment by certain fanatical Sultans and Governors under Mughal and Pathan kings, it is also undeniable that such ill-treatment could not and was not intended to improve the miserable condition of the Muslim masses. The political and economic condition of the Hindu and Muslim masses had if anything deteriorated by such misrule and misgovernment of the country.

While considering the Muslim Period we must remember that during these mediæval times land was, as before, the main source of income, but it had not now remained in the hands of the masses. A class enjoying political power had definitely sprung up who had divided large portions of the

land among themselves. They were the feudal lords, and the masses of landless labourers served under them as serfs. It might be asked why people preferred work under these lords as serfs to possession of the land which was allowed to remain uncultivated. The reason was that freedom from extortion, undue taxes and other difficulties, such as a poor cultivator could enjoy under an influential lord, could not be had as a free peasant-proprietor. The feudal lords known as jagirdars and zemindars influenced the Government to a considerable degree. When Islam became the state religion, Muslim feudal lords wielded greater political power than the Hindu lords. This must especially have been the case when a king or a governor was imbued with fanatic religious zeal. Hindu lords were maltreated, insulted and harassed. The tussle was between the upper classes of the Hindus and Muslims. Naturally any of the well-to-do Hindus who embraced Islam derived great benefit and advantage from conversion. The history of those days is the chronicle of the doings of these upper classes. This fanaticism of the ruler or the religious warfare of the upper classes (conducted mainly to gain political power and economic benefits) did not directly affect the masses whether Hindus or Muslims. This does not mean that when the Heads of the Administration who should have been engaged in establishing good government were so engrossed with each other's destruction, the people of the country as a whole did not suffer.

Progress could only be made when there was peace and tranquillity all over the country. And this could be possible when the monarch was good and held the balance of justice evenly between the various sections of his people.

From all this it is evident that there is no truth in the common though erroneous view that during the Muslim rule in Kashmir the Muslims as a community tyrannised over the Hindus. That reading of history is essentially and fundamentally wrong. It is a travesty of facts. The large majority of the Muslims, *i.e.*, the Muslim masses had usually nothing to do with the persecution of the Hindus. They could not be and were not a conscious party to it. Nor is it a fact that the Hindu masses were tyrannised as a class. The brunt of the persecution had to be borne by the upper classes of the Hindus, and that mainly for political and economic reasons though religious fanaticism of the Kings and other Muslim vested interests like the *mullahs* and nobles did play a part in prompting and justifying such persecution.

Much harm has been done by this misreading of history. Many young men have been misled in the past by absurd views about the political and economic conditions during the period when Kashmir was under Muslim kings. Unfortunately these views continue to be held even now and, what is still worse is that on the assumption that Muslims maltreated Hindus in the past, it is believed that the two communities cannot unite now or in the future. This has brought

about a reaction in the Muslim mind and so mistrust and mutual enmity continues and even waxes more and more. It is in the interests of our motherland that the past history should be analysed correctly and read scientifically, without prejudice or malice, sentimental make-believe or so-called patriotic white-washing. Most of the histories were written by men who worked under the influence of the upper classes. Although their intentions were good it is difficult to believe that they could judge the events dispassionately. We must therefore sift the facts according to the principles of scientific interpretation available to us now. We must look at facts from a comprehensive and a synthetic point of view and try to find how the masses and not only the classes fared during those days.

In spite of the bad times that people had to face during the Muslim period not much diminution was discernible in the cultural progress of the people. Thinkers and authors continued to flourish. Some valuable works in Sanskrit were produced. As soon as Muslim rule established itself, Persian became the court language. Not only the Muslims but Hindus as well began to study the language, and in course of time the country produced many indigenous scholars of it.

Among the important Sanskrit works of this period mention may be made of Jagaddhar Bhat's *Stutikusumanjali* (1350 A.D.), a book which has been highly praised for its literary merit by competent authorities ; Sitikantha's *Balbodhini* (1475 A.D.)

Vallabhadev's *Padyavali* (1550 A.D.); and Sivopadhyaya's *Vijnana Bhairava* (1775 A.D.), a brilliant book on *Shaivism*.

Books written in Persian as at present known to us are about 350 in number. They are on philosophy, religion, history, geography, medicine and, of course, literature. I have already mentioned the important names in the domain of historical works. Some biographies of the period are *Tazkara-i-Murshadin* by Khwaja Miram Bazaz (1575 A.D.), *Asrar-ul-Abrar* by Baba Daud Mushakani (1653 A.D.) and *Tazkara-i-Shuara-i-Kashmir* by Mulla Zihni (1655 A.D.). In the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, Mulla Ahmad Allama translated the *Raj Tarangini* and the *Mahabharat* into Persian. A little later Dara Shikoh translated some of the Upnishads into this language.

In philosophy the names of Baba Daud Khaki, Khwaja Habib Ullah Navshahri and Mirza Akmal-ud-Din Kamil lead the others. The prodigious work of the last named *Bahar-ul-Urfan*, which was written in reply to that of Maulana Jalal-ud-Din Rumi, is in four volumes and comprises 80,000 verses.

Persian poetry flourished in Kashmir in the Mughal times. Numerous poets have left their works. Sarfi, Mulla Ashraf, Baha-ud-Din Mattu, Maulana Mazhari, Mulla Tayib and Mulla Faroghi deserve mention in a history of Kashmir.

The greatest poet of the Muslim Period, Mohammad Tahir Gani, who wrote exquisite Persian poetry which elicited the praise of the poets of Iran, flourished in the reign of Aurangzeb.

Munshi Bhavani Dass Kachru, whose new style of the *Bahar-i-Tavil* in persian poetry is held in high esteem, lived in the reign of Pathans near about 1800 A.D.

Many Pandits also wrote poetry in Persian when that language became the language of the rulers of the country. Out of these three require special mention. Pandit Taba Ram Turki "Betab" (1840 A.D.) whose *Jang Nama* stands on par with *Shah Nama* of Firdausi lived during the time of the Sikhs; Pandit Raj Kaul Arzbegi "Dairi" (1887 A.D.) whose poetry is second only to that of Ghani from a literary point of view; Pandit Raj Kak Dhar "Farrukh" who died early in Maharaja Gulab Singh's reign.

A book on medicine was written by Hakim Mansur and another on the diseases of horses by Mohammad Murad. Mulla Muhsin Fani wrote an important book *Dabistan-i-Mazahib* on the religions of the world in the reign of Shah Jehan. This book has been translated into French and English. Those of the Kashmiris who had embraced Islam became interested in Arabic in which about 25 books mostly dealing with religious customs and practices among Muslims were also written. Notable among Arabic writers is Mulla Muhsan Khushu, who lived in the reign of Aurangzeb.

In the Hindu Period, Sanskrit was the court language. But the common people did not speak it. The language they spoke was *Prakrit*, a corrupt form of Sanskrit which in course of time took the shape of Kashmiri, which is the language of

the people now. Books have been written in this language also from very early times. In the 13th century Rajanaka Shiti Kantha wrote his *Mahanaya Prakash* in Kashmiri. Sheikh Nur-ud-Din, a saint, who lived in the reign of Zain-ul-Abidin, has left us a big volume of his sayings. Soma Bhat wrote *Zaina Charita*, a biography of the King—Badshah in prose, Udh Bhat brought out *Zaina Vilas*, a dramatic work, dealing with an episode in the King's life. Other remarkable books in Kashmiri poetry are Sahib Kaul's *Krishna Avatar* and Prakash Bhat's *Ram Avatar*.

It is interesting to note that women took part in these intellectual pursuits and produced works of no mean order. Mention may be made of four such eminent ladies. Lal Ded who lived in the reign of Sultan Shahab-ud-Din about 1350 A.D. and Rupa Bhavani who flourished about the end of the sixteenth century are very famous. Their mystical sayings are profound, particularly those of Lal Ded, who is certainly one of the most remarkable women that India has produced. Both of them were religious-minded and saintly in character. To a different type belong Habba Khatun, a peasant girl who lived to be the queen of King Yusuf Shah Chak (1579—86), and Mrs. Bhavani Dass Kachru. Both of them were deeply interested in and devoted to music besides poetry.

I have mentioned the introduction of certain industries such as paper-making, shawl manufacturing and silk-cacoon-rearing in the days of King Zain-ul-Abidin. These and some other cottage

industries, notably papier-machie, manufacture of *pattu* and woodwork, flourished during the Muslim Period and supplemented the income of the masses. Hundreds of thousands of people made their living by working in these industries so that in the beginning of the last century the supervision of these industries and the protection of the rights of the men working in them had become a political problem, and a Government Department was established for the purpose. It is, however, very sad that the various Governors under Pathans and Sikhs did not take much interest in them and instead of helping the industries levied exorbitant taxes on them. The shawl industry which was by far the most important of all the industries and provided means of livelihood for lakhs of poor workers was in a sad plight. I shall have to say more about this industry in the next chapter. For the present suffice it to say that these workers were treated as no better than serfs and had to work on a miserable pittance. The only interest of the authorities was to extort their *baj* (tax) which was levied in the Sikh period on the shops and was raised to Rs. 120/- yearly, and not on the finished product at 3 annas per rupee of value as was fixed before. Moorcraft has stated that more than one lakh and twenty-five thousand people were employed in shawl industry in Srinagar alone.

From all impartial accounts that have been left to us the Pathan and the Sikh rules were horrible. Not only did oppression prevail in their time but people were heavily taxed and

money was extorted from them in every possible manner. The officials were extremely corrupt and life and property of the citizens were always in danger. The Government appropriated a large portion of the produce of the soil and almost the whole of the remaining was taken away by corrupt officials. People were reduced to abject poverty and the cultivators would not voluntarily till the land. Forced labour was revived with renewed vigour, if not introduced for the first time, and people were made to work against their will. The country was seething with discontent and to keep the people under control a new class of landlords was created and *jagirs* were granted to them. At the advent of the present Dogra Rule it was found that no less than 3115 *jagirs* had thus been granted.

Under these political and economic circumstances of the post-Mughal Kashmir, the creative arts deteriorated; and we hear of no remarkable productions of painting and sculpture, nor of any noble monuments of architecture.

## CHAPTER II

# Early Dogra Rule

Maharaja Ranjit Singh died in 1839 A.D. His successors to the throne of the Punjab were imbecile and inefficient. They could not hold the Sikh Empire intact. Faction soon set in at the court at Lahore, and it became evident that the Sikh rule was on its last legs.

By the end of the eighteenth century, soon after the death of Raja Ranjit Dev in 1781 A.D., Jammu and other principalities round about it had become a part of the Sikh Empire. Gulab Singh, who was a descendant of Dhruva Dev, father of Ranjit Dev, notable Dogra Rajput chieftain of the hills, entered the service of Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1812 A.D. As a reward for his loyal services he was awarded the title of Raja and granted the principality of Jammu by Maharaja Ranjit Singh in 1819. He rose to great eminence at the court of the Maharaja and, after his death, was easily the most influential man in the Sikh Empire. But knowing, as he did, that it was dangerous to meddle in the Sikh politics

in the chaotic conditions which followed the death of Ranjit Singh, he had retired to his own native place. His brothers, Dhyan Singh and Suchet Singh, had, one after the other, paid with their lives for having taken part in the political intrigues at Lahore. Therefore, though he was persuaded to guide the destinies of the Sikhs, he refused to do any such thing for several years. Instead he applied himself to the task of consolidating his own kingdom in the hills. He annexed one after another all other petty principalities that were lying in the neighbourhood and between the Kashmir valley and Jammu. He conquered Baltistan and Western Tibet from 1835 to 1842 A.D. His famous general, Wazir Zorawar Singh, had even conceived the idea of conquering the central Tibetan Province for his master in 1841, but the rigours of the cold climate stood against him and he was killed in a battle and his army put to the sword by the Tibetans.

While the forces of Gulab Singh were busy in conquering Ladakh, as Western Tibet is commonly known, he himself was helping the British on another Indian frontier. In 1841 the British had suffered heavy reverses in the North Western Frontier and, knowing that they were destined to be the future power in India, Gulab Singh went to their succour when asked to do so. It was during these days that his alliance with the British was formed.

In November 1845 the Anglo-Sikh war broke out. Soon it became obvious that the campaign

was going against the Sikhs. The Durbar at Lahore demanded the return of Gulab Singh to take over charge of the Empire and he was installed as the Prime Minister in 1846. He reproached the Sikh leaders for entering on so serious a campaign and tried to make a compromise with the British. Gulab Singh has been charged by Cunnigham and other contemporary writers with having intrigued with the British to bring about the downfall of the Sikhs.

That Gulab Singh was in correspondence with the British authorities long before he was called upon to discharge the onerous duties of the Prime Minister of the Sikh Empire, there can be no manner of doubt. On 20th February, 1845, Hardinge writing to Ellenborough said:

> "Gulab Singh has again written to us, delighted to enter into terms with us............The Raja has now sent us a letter entreating us to lose no time."

As a matter of fact, soon after the death of Ranjit Singh, the Raja began to think of his future and was busy in carving a kingdom for himself.

Even before open hostilities were declared between the Sikhs and the British, Ellenborough wrote in the course of a communication to the Queen on 14th February, 1844:

> "In the hills Raja Gulab Singh is extending his power with his usual unscrupulous disregard of the rights of others and of the supremacy of the State he pretends to serve. This conduct however makes him very odious to the Sikhs at Lahore."

With such designs in his mind it was natural that Gulab Singh would not like to present a bold

and decisive front to the British. He wanted to curry favour with the rising power in India. So he left no stone unturned to bring about a compromise. But his endeavours proved unsuccessful, the battle of Subraon was fought, and the Sikhs were defeated. Writing about this war, which sealed the fate of the Khalsa, Cunningham, the impartial historian of the Sikhs writes:

"The English intimated to Gulab Singh their readiness to acknowledge a Sikh sovereignty in Lahore after the army should have been disbanded, but the Raja declared his inability to deal with the troops.........the views of either party were in some sort met by an understanding that the Sikh army should be attacked by the English, and that when beaten it should be openly abandoned by its own Government and, further, that the passage of Sutluj should be unopposed and the road to the Capital laid open to the victors. Under such circumstances of discreet policy and shameless treason was the battle of Subroan fought.*

According to Major B. P. Basu, the celebrated author of the *Rise of Christian Power in India*, " the battle of Subraon was altogether a shameful affair, for the English won the victory by the sacrifice of all sense of honour, honesty, conscience and humanity " (page 879).

William Edwards has also described the part which Gulab Singh played at this crisis of the Sikh Empire. He says:

"When the Sikhs were defeated at Moodkee, Feroze Shuhur and Allewal, the army lost all confidence in Rajas Lal, Tej Singh and their other leaders, whom they accused of conspiring with the British Government for their destruction, and invited Gulab Singh to place himself at their head. The Raja

**History of the Sikhs*, page 324.

promised compliance and arrived in due time at Lahore with a large body of his own hill troops in whom he could place implicit reliance. He persuaded the Durbar to allow himself to garrison the fortress at Lahore with these men while the Sikhs then occupying it were ordered to proceed to join their brethren on the Sutluj.........Gulab Singh urged the army not to attempt attacking the British until he joined them and this he evaded doing on one pretext or another knowing full well that in due time the British would attack and capture the position at Subraon."*

It is clear, then, that Gulab Singh and other Sikh leaders did not faithfully lead the armies. What would have been the fate of the war but for this bad leadership has been stated by William Edwards thus :

"Had they advanced during the night, the result must have been very disastrous for us, as our European regiments were much reduced in number, and our ammunition, both for artillery and small arms, almost expended. It was inexplicable at the time to us why this fresh army had failed to advance and reinforce their comrades. Subsequently at Lahore, however, I was informed that their leaders had restrained the men on the pretext that the day was inauspicious for a battle, it by no means being the intention of the regency that their troops should be successful, but, on the contrary, be destroyed by the British, so as to get rid of them for ever."**

It was by means such as these that Raja Gulab Singh earned the gratitude of the British diplomats and paved the way for the establishment of the Dogra State in the North of India.

After the battle of Subraon the Sikhs lost their independence and the British marched on Lahore and captured it.

*_Reminiscences of a Bengal Civilian_, page 104.

**Page 97.

On the 9th of March, 1846, the Treaty of Lahore was signed. Among other things provided for in this treaty it was stipulated that Raja Gulab Singh would be recognised as an independent sovereign in such territories and districts in the hills as may be made over to the said Raja by separate agreement between him and the British Government. This separate agreement, known to history by the name of the Treaty of Amritsar, was signed on the 15th of March, 1846. According to this treaty, Gulab Singh was recognised as the Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir both by the powerless Sikh Durbar and the British Government. He had to pay an amount of £1,500,000 to the British for the transfer to him of the Kashmir Province including Gilgit, which had been conquered by the Sikhs in 1842. The valley of Kashmir, sacred in Hindu mythology and famous all over the world, became once again subject to Hindu Rulers who, however, were non-Kashmiris.

While making this transfer the British authorities in India did not so much as ascertain the views of the people of Kashmir on the subject. The whole transaction was made behind their back. Subsequently the undemocratic and highly arbitrary action of the Governor-General was severely criticised. For reasons of their own, as we shall presently see, the British imperialists and expansionists did not like that such an ideal place for colonisation should go out of the hands of the British. But those who loved freedom and did not like that lacs of people should be handed over to the

tender mercies of absolutism disapproved of the manner in which the valley was transferred to the Dogra Chief.

The handing over of Kashmir could not be effected without trouble. Gulab Singh sent some troops under Wazir Lakhpat to take over the charge, but the Governor, Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, under incitement of Lal Singh, an enemy of Gulab Singh at the Lahore court, refused to surrender the valley. A fight ensued and Gulab Singh's troops were defeated and Wazir Lakhpat was slain. Gulab Singh appealed to the British to carry out the provisions of the treaty. A mixed force of the British and Sikhs was promptly despatched, but before it reached Srinagar matters took a different turn. Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, realising the situation, gave up the game. The transfer of the country was thus effected without any further disturbance. Thus, by the middle of the nineteenth century, was formed the present State of Jammu and Kashmir, including Ladakh, Baltistan and Gilgit, under the first ruler of the Dogra dynasty.

Situated on the northern extremity of India, the State of Jammu and Kashmir occupies a very important and strategical position in the political map of the British Indian Empire. Its boundaries extend from the northern outskirts of the vast plains of the Punjab to the point where the borders of independent powers of Russia and China almost touch British India. The independent kingdom of Afghanistan meets it on the North West. Jammu and Kashmir covers an area of 84,471 square

miles against 82698 square miles of Hyderabad, 20469 square miles of Mysore and 8164 square miles of Baroda. It is equal to two-thirds of the size of the whole of Bombay Presidency.

Geographically the State is divided into three provinces of (*a*) Jammu, (*b*) Kashmir and (*c*) the Frontier Illaqa. The Jammu Province consists of the sub-montane and semi-mountainous tract contiguous to the Punjab and broken *Kandi* country skirting the Himalayan ranges, as also the outer hills south of the mountain ranges. The Kashmir Province consists of the Jhelum valley and the valleys that drain into the Kishen Ganga and the Liddar. The Frontier Province comprises the district of Gilgit and the Illaqas of Ladakh, Skardu, Kargil and Zanskar,

Articles 1, 3, 9 and 10 of the Treaty of Amritsar will be read with interest:—

**Article 1**

The British Government TRANSFERS and makes over for ever in independent possession to Maharaja Gulab Singh and the heirs male of his body all the hilly or mountainous country with its dependencies situated to the eastward of the River Indus and the westward of the River Ravi including Chamba and excluding Lahul, being part of the territories ceded to the British Government by the Lahore State according to the provisions of the Article IV of the Treaty of Lahore, dated 9th March, 1846.

**Article 3**

In consideration of the transfer made to him and his heirs by the provisions of the foregoing article Maharaja Gulab Singh will pay to the British Government the sum of seventy-five lakhs of rupees (Nanakshahi), fifty lakhs to be paid on ratifica-

tion of this Treaty and twenty-five lakhs on or before the 1st October of the current year, A.D. 1846.

**Article 9**

The British Government will give its aid to Maharaja Gulab Singh in protecting his territories from external enemies.

**Article 10**

Maharaja Gulab Singh will acknowledge the supremacy of the British Government and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British Government one horse, twelve shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of Cashmere shawls.

Although the district of Hazara also went over to Gulab Singh according to the Treaty of Amritsar, he soon after exchanged this area for Mandir, Dadhi, Kathua and Suchetgarh.

The Treaty of Amritsar did not mention anything about the internal administration of the State. Evidently Gulab Singh was left completely free to deal with it as he liked. He was to be the master of his kingdom. He was to be its sovereign. In later days the British authorities themselves have bemoaned the handing over of Kashmir to an Indian Prince. But at the time of signing the treaty they knew next to nothing about the valley. Not more than half a dozen Englishmen had visited the whole area and none of these had done so with any political purpose in view. Therefore they found this arrangement inevitable during those uncertain times when Punjab politics were in a fluid state and the North-Western Frontier and Afghanistan were unsettled. The only anxiety of the British was to have a subordinate ally in the north and they were

admirably successful in getting one in the person of Gulab Singh. "One great object which the Governor-General had in view when he made this arrangement for the Jammu and Kashmir territories was to lessen the force of the Sikhs by establishing on their flank a power independent of them and inclined to British," wrote Drew. He added, "This object may be said to have so far succeeded that, on the next and final trial of strength between the Sikhs and the British, Gulab Singh's aid was withheld from the nation to which formerly belonged his allegiance." It will be seen that even the mere mention of a British Resident in Kashmir was not made in the Treaty. But the situation changed almost immediately when the second Treaty of Lahore was signed a few months after that very year bringing the Punjab under the control of a British Resident at Lahore. The Governor-General did not like the Maharaja to enjoy as much freedom as was guaranteed to him under the provisions of the Treaty. Soon after the Second Sikh War when the allied forces of Chattar Singh and Dost Mohammad were defeated by the British at Gujrat in 1848, Lord Hardinge wrote to the Maharaja stating that the nature of his internal administration aroused misgivings in the minds of the British Government and claiming the right on the part of the Company to interfere in his affairs. The purpose behind this communication was to get a permanent Resident appointed in Kashmir. The Maharaja resisted. The question was, however, raised again in 1851 when the Maharaja agreed to the appointment of a seasonal British Officer, with

no powers of political supervision, merely to look after the affairs of European visitors to the valley during the hot season. The proposal to appoint a Resident was again revived in 1873 during the days of Maharaja Ranbir Singh who like his father pointed out that there was no provision in the Treaty that gave authority to the British Government to appoint a Resident. The Resident was, as we shall see a little later, ultimately appointed in place of the seasonal British Officer on Special Duty. This was in 1885 at the accession of Maharaja Partap Singh to the throne.

Maharaja Gulab Singh proved to be a strong and stern ruler. He did not live long to rule over Kashmir, but during the short period of about eleven years he tried to establish peace in the country with a strong hand. Much of his energy was spent unsuccessfully in trying to subdue the frontier district of Gilgit which continued to be in a state of disturbance. In 1852 the Dogras were expelled from all that part of Dardistan which is on the right bank of the Indus. Gilgit went out of their hands and Gulab Singh decided to advance no further.

Gulab Singh tried to rule the country justly according to his own lights, but partly owing to the exigencies of the unsettled and unprogressive times and partly to his own avarice and greed, he could not improve the economic condition of the people. It continued to be most dilapidated, verging on starvation. "This last state was worse than the first," wrote Lieutenant-Colonel Torrens, "for Gulab Singh went

beyond his predecessors in the gentle acts of undue taxation and extortion. They had taxed heavily it is true, but he sucked the very life blood of the people. They had laid violent hands on a large proportion of the fruits of the earth, the profits of the loom and the work of men's hands, but he skinned the very flints to fill his coffers." It is said that Gulab Singh "was traduced, slandered and openly accused by the champions of the Sikhs, by the imperialists and annexationists of the day, and by the anonymous writers in the press, to whom his towering personality offered a unique target for attack." Frederic Drew is partial to the Dogras having been in their service during the sixties of the last century as Governor of Ladakh. He had formed his impressions from what the servants and subjects of the Maharaja spoke about him. Nevertheless, in any impartial record of the time, his testimony must be quoted side by side with that of others, not so complimentary to the Maharaja. This is what he says:

"As an administrator he was better than most of those of his own time and neighbourhood, but yet the results of his rule do not give one the highest impression of his powers in this respect. He knew how to govern a country in the sense of making his authority respected all through it. For the carrying out of the further objects of good government he probably cared little; his experience had shown him no instance of their attainment and possibly he had not in his mind the idea of a Government different in kind from that which he succeeded in administering; for of all the Governments within reach of his observation those were good in which the authority of the ruler was assured by force and the revenue came in punctually. On this principle he consolidated his power.

"One of his chief faults was an unscrupulousness as to the means of attaining his own objects; he did not draw back from the exercise of cruelty in the pursuit of them, but he was not wantonly cruel. An avariciousness always distinguished him; in the indulgence of the passion he was unable to take the wide view by which his subjects' wealth would be found compatible with the increase of his own."*

Even K. M. Pannikar, whose inspired biography of the Maharaja is the best panegyric that could be drawn of him, has to admit that "the Maharaja did not achieve his ends by methods which were always beyond criticism. He did not hesitate to resort to tricks and strategems which would, in ordinary life, be considered dishonourable. He was trained in a hard school, where lying, intrigue and treachery were all considered part and parcel of politics."† But Maharaja Gulab Singh was true to the British till his last day. However he might have dealt with others and in whatever way he might have treated his own subjects, he always readily and loyally co-operated with the British. He helped them a great deal to consolidate themselves in the Punjab and North-Western Frontier. He despatched troops under the command of his son, Ranbir Singh, to help them to quell the widespread political rising of 1857 against the British. The Maharaja died the same year.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh ascended the *gaddi* in 1857. He maintained the traditions of his father in remaining faithful and loyal to the British; and

---

**Jammu and Kashmir Territories*, pages 14-15.

†*Gulab Singh*, page 152.

rendered inestimable services to them unselfishly and ungrudgingly in the siege of Delhi, the very first year of his reign. He refused even to take rations for his troops and, when a *jagir* was offered to him in Oudh in recognition of these services, he refused to accept it. He proudly remarked that he had helped the British Government out of loyalty and goodwill and not with the sordid object of receiving remuneration.

As soon as his resources became free from the operations attending the Indian rebellion, Maharaja Ranbir Singh turned his attention towards the frontier of Gilgit. He wanted to regain what his father had lost and to re-establish the name and reputation of his army. There were internal dissensions between the Rajas of various parts of the frontier. The Rajas of Hunza and Nagar hated each other and those of Punial and Yasin were scarcely on better terms. Fortunately also the most determined of them all, Gauhar Rehman, who had held Gilgit from 1852, died before Maharaja's troops reached the frontier. Maharaja Ranbir Singh did not only regain what his father had lost but he subdued even Yasin in 1863. In 1865, when at the instigation of the Mehtar of Chitral disturbances reappeared on the frontier, reinforcements were sent by the Maharaja, and this time Darel valley was also occupied.

The British had by this time annexed the Punjab and established themselves firmly in Northern India. The rising of 1857 had been sternly and successfully suppressed and no traces of opposition were left

anywhere in the country. They became anxious about Kashmir. The Maharaja's power was no longer required to lessen the force of the Sikhs. The value of Kashmir and the importance of Gilgit was becoming every day clearer to the Government of India and they waited now for an opportunity to meddle in the affairs of the State. It was at this stage that they made the suggestion for the appointing of a British Resident, which Maharaja Ranbir Singh did not accept.

Having failed to achieve any success by negotiations the British, as always, did the next best thing : they began to accuse the Maharaja of misgovernment. Anglo-Indian newspapers began to write that the misgovernment justified British intervention. The gravest charges of apathy towards his subjects and even of dreadful cruelty were brought against him. On one occasion it was declared that in order to save the expense of feeding his people during the famine of 1877, the Maharaja actually drowned his poor Muslim subjects by boatloads in Wular Lake. Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a man of strong will and resolution. He declined to sit quietly under such a calumny, and at his request a mixed commission was appointed by the Government of India to inquire into the truth of the story. The commission found that there was no truth in this hideous allegation, and the people who were said to be drowned were found alive and were produced at the inquiry. Other calumnies of a similar nature were circulated but were found to be false on examination by the British Officer. The

British, therefore, considered it advisable to keep silent for the time being and bide their time.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh was a man of peace. He was a great patron of letters and respected men of learning. He liked to sit in the company of scholars and benefit by their debates and discussions. He encouraged research and established a good library of old Sanskrit and Persian manuscripts.

Two notable events took place during the reign of Ranbir Singh. One was a clash between the Shia and the Sunni sects of the Muslims in 1872. It was a serious riot, the most serious that had broken out for many a day. The Shias are a numerical minority, mostly concentrated in one place, Zadibal, in Srinagar, and it was easy for the Sunnis to attack them on all sides. They were looted, their houses were burnt and many lives were lost. Other Shias living in the country-side, at Badgam and Magam and other villages, also suffered terrible privations. The riot caused an estrangement between the two sects that has not been forgotten or forgiven completely unto this day. The Maharaja gave three lakhs of rupees as relief to the Shias. The second event was the great famine of 1877, caused by excessive rains, when thousands of people died of scarcity of food and whole villages were ruined.

The Afghan War broke out in 1878. The loyal Maharaja as usual readily volunteered help and sent a contingent of troops and artillery to assist the British Government. This war made the British more anxious than ever about the Gilgit frontier

and their desire to interfere in the affairs of the State became keener. At the conclusion of the Afghan War they began to mature their scheme of intervention.

The Government of India knew full well that so long as Maharaja Ranbir Singh was alive it was very difficult for them to succeed in their designs. Early in 1884, however, it became apparent that the death of the Maharaja was near at hand. So the time had come for determining the course which the British Government should adopt on the death of the Maharaja. The Government of India in a communication dated 7th April, 1884, to the Secretary of State laid down their views on the subject. In this communication it was presumed that there was misgovernment in Kashmir, the administration was corrupt and inefficient, and drastic reforms to improve the conditions were necessary. Some unsatisfactory accounts of the heir-apparent were also mentioned. On the basis of these "charges," it was suggested that immediately on the occurrence of the next succession the Maharaja be informed that changes in administrative policy must take place though the Government of India would avoid any direct interference with administrative details.

A strong case was made out in the name of the people of the State, which, however, was not the real intention. The Government of India wanted to appoint a political Resident, which the Treaty of Amritsar did not allow them to do. They wanted to occupy the frontier of Gilgit, for which no occasion had arisen. They did not hide their purpose

and let the cat out of the bag in the communication referred to above. They said :

"It is a measure which may be called for, not merely by the need of assisting and supervising administrative reforms, but also by the increasing importance to the Government of India of watching events beyond the North-Western Frontier of Kashmir. Any disturbance which continued misgovernment might create in Kashmir would be acutely felt on the Frontier of Afghanistan............We have, therefore, to consider the necessity of providing for efficient political supervision not merely in the interests of the people of Kashmir but also in the interests of people of India. Under these circumstances we are anxious to obtain from Her Majesty's Government authority to appoint, if it should appear to us necessary at any time after the death of the present Maharaja, a residential political officer, who will exercise a general supervision over the affairs of the Kashmir State."

The mind of the authorities at Simla was made up. They had decided to thrust a Political Resident on the new Maharaja, whether he liked it or not. They told the Secretary of State that the British Government were not debarred by any engagement, express or tacit (honest interpretation of the Treaty of Amritsar indeed !), from posting a political officer permanently in Kashmir. The Secretary of State was only too willing and obliging to agree with the Government of India, and in his reply he advised them not to lose any time on the expected succession of the new Maharaja to carry out the project of appointing a Resident in Kashmir. His Lordship wrote :

"In 1846 it was decided not to appoint a political officer to reside permanently at the Maharaja's Court, whilst in 1873,

when the measure was recommended by Lord Norfolk's Government, the necessity for it did not seem to Her Majesty's Government to be so clearly established as to justify them in disregarding objections which were expressed by authorities entitled to respect. But in the interval which has since elapsed circumstances have greatly changed: and whether regard be had to the condition of the country, or to the character of the prince into whose hands the Government will shortly pass, or to the course of the events beyond the border which has materially increased the political importance of Kashmir, the appointment which you request a discretionary authority to make appears to be not only desirable but necessary."

The following ominous remark of the Secretary of State, in which may be traced the seeds of the communal policy adopted by the Government of India towards the State problems and which became so prominent in later years, may also be quoted :—

"It may indeed be questioned whether, having regard to the circumstances under which the sovereignty of the country was entrusted to the present Hindu ruling family, the intervention of the British Government on behalf of the Mohammedan population has not already been too long delayed."

This from the British Government which transacted the transfer of Kashmir with an undue haste, behind the back of the very Mohammedan population! Was it not the British Government who helped the Hindu Maharaja to occupy Kashmir when the Muslim Governor, Sheikh Imam-ud-Din, had routed his army and killed his Vizier in 1846? But the circumstances had entirely changed in 1885. The Maharaja of Kashmir was no more needed against the Sikhs.

Be that as it may, the Government of India in their letter dated 1st August, 1884, instructed their Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir, one Sir Oliver St. John, how he should conduct the whole affair on the occurrence of the opportunity. Maharaja Ranbir Singh died on 12th September, 1885. The next day his dead body was cremated at Jammu on the banks of the river Tawi. Sir Oliver, who had lately arrived from Kashmir to discharge his duties, now proceeded to fulfil his mission. How he did it and with what results may be described in the very words he used in reporting the matter to the Government of India:—

"After a few sentences of compliment and condolence, I told Pertab Singh that I had a message for him from the Viceroy, to be delivered in the presence of his Council. He replied that he had not yet appointed a Council, to which I answered that it was to the members of late Maharaja's Council that I referred. He then called in Diwan Anant Ram alone. It was clear that an unpalatable communication was anticipated, and that it was hoped to confine it to as small a circle of hearers as possible. I therefore said that the message I had to deliver was not private and confidential though very important. On the contrary I had hoped to deliver it to His Highness in Durbar; but this being impossible, I begged that he would call in at least Babu Nilambar and Diwan Gobind Sahai, who, I knew, were waiting outside. On this, Pertab Singh ordered them to come in. On their seating themselves, I told His Highness that His Excellency the Viceroy had ordered me in the first place to lose no time in announcing that His Excellency is pleased to recognise his succession to the Chiefship. This was received with expressions of gratitude and loyalty, the Maharaja rising and bowing his thanks. I then gave him the message contained in your letter, translating it sentence by

sentence into Hindustani, only using the words "Kashmir and Jammu" instead of "Kashmir" only as it might have been asserted afterwards that the message referred to Kashmir only, and not to the whole State.

"The first part of the message referring to the introduction of reforms was received without any mark of surprise by my auditors, but the announcement of the immediate appointment of a Resident was evidently an unexpected blow.

"I then took leave of the Maharaja. In the evening Babu Nilambar called on me with reference to another subject, and asked that I would explain, for the Maharaja's information, what was meant by the 'assistance' of a Resident. Did it imply that the Resident would take an active part in the administration of the country? I told him that I could not undertake to define the exact duties of a Resident, but that he would certainly leave all the active work of administration to the Durbar, while claiming the right to be made acquainted, should he require it, with all its details. He would give advice if asked for, and on any point he thought proper unasked; and in this latter case would expect his advice to be followed."

Next day, on 16th September, the Maharaja sent Babu Nilambar and Diwan Anant Ram to Sir Oliver begging him to use his influence to obtain a short delay before the appointment of a Resident in order that the Maharaja might get the credit for reforms he had long made up his mind to introduce. But the officer was helpless and regretted his inability to recommend to His Excellency any delay in the formal appointment of a Resident. While thankfully acknowledging the *Kharita* dated the 14th September received by him from His Excellency the Viceroy confirming his succession to the Chiefship of Jammu and Kashmir, Maharaja Partap Singh said:

"It has, however, pained me exceedingly to learn that exactly at the time when I had made up my mind to deserve and win over Your Excellency's approbation and encouragement, by proving myself equal to the onerous and responsible duties of a good ruler, Your Excellency has been thinking of changing the status of the British Officer on Special Duty in Kashmir to that of a Political Resident, and thus lowering me in the eyes of my subjects and in the estimation of the public."

Mian Partap Singh took his seat formally in the Durbar as Maharaja on the 25th of September. Sir Oliver St. John became the first Resident in Kashmir. He was not on very cordial terms with the Maharaja but did not set himself in opposition to his Government at every step. He was transferred from Kashmir early in 1886 and was succeeded by Mr. Plowden. From the very moment that Mr. Plowden took charge of his office he assumed an attitude unfavourable to His Highness. He affected a lofty, supercilious air and treated the Durbar with almost undisguised contempt. Soon he became obnoxious. At the time of proposing the appointment of a Political Resident it had been definitely stated that such an officer would not enjoy any special powers other than those that were ordinarily given to a British Resident in a feudatory State. When after many protests the Maharaja reconciled himself to the position, the Government of India did not feel satisfied. They wanted full control over the whole State and it was to achieve this end that Mr. Plowden directed his activities.

In March 1888 Mr. Plowden sent a report to the

Government of India on the affairs of the State, in which he definitely stated, on the basis of his personal observations, that Maharaja Partap Singh was incapable and unfit to rule, and that he could do nothing beneficial for the people. He therefore boldly proposed to the British to set him aside and rule the country themselves with the help of an administration directly supervised by them. He put forth three schemes to achieve this purpose. One plan was to appoint Raja Ram Singh, Maharaja's younger brother, the Prime Minister "on the condition of his undertaking to carry out in all respects the policy of the Government of India."

Before the Government of India could take any decision in the matter, Maharaja Partap Singh forestalled them and submitted a scheme for the administration of his State. Indeed, he put the scheme into practice, nominated a Council of Ministers and appointed himself its President. As outwardly the Government of India was bringing pressure on the Maharaja in the name of his people and with a view to ending misgovernment, the Foreign Office did not approve of the haste with which Mr. Plowden wanted to proceed and therefore set aside his proposals. But what was at the bottom of the whole affair can be seen from what H. M. Durand, the Foreign Secretary, wrote in his minute recorded in the file. He said :

"I do not agree with Mr. Plowden, the Resident in Kashmir, in this matter. He is too much inclined to set Kashmir aside in all ways, and to assume that if we want a thing done we must do it ourselves. The more I think of this

scheme, the more clear it seems to me that we should limit our overt interference as far as possible to the organization of a responsible military force in Gilgit. So far we can hope to carry the Durbar thoroughly with us. If we annex Gilgit or put an end to the suzerainty of Kashmir over the petty principalities of the neighbourhood, and, above all, if we put British troops into Kashmir just now, we shall run a risk of turning the Durbar against us and thereby increase the difficulty of the position. I do not think this is necessary. No doubt we must have practically the control of Kashmir relations with those principalities, but this we already have. Indeed, the Durbar has now, since the dismissal of Lachman Dass, asked Mr. Plowden to advise the Gilgit authorities direct without reference to them. If we have a quiet and judicious Officer at Gilgit, who will get the Kashmir force into thorough order and abstain from unnecessary exercise of his influence, we shall, I hope, in a short time, have the whole thing in our hand without hurting any one's feelings."

His Excellency Lord Dufferin agreed with Durand and the Maharaja escaped unnecessary disgrace and humiliation at the time.

But Mr. Plowden was incensed. Having failed to harm Partap Singh in this way, he now began to act according to the principles of occidental diplomacy. He began to intrigue and hatched a conspiracy. We have seen how the Britishers used Gulab Singh against the Sikhs. In a similar manner Mr. Plowden and after him his successor, Colonel Nisbet, used Raja Amar Singh, the Maharaja's youngest brother.

Maharaja Ranbir Singh had three sons and it was known that the country had been rent asunder for years by the rival claims and factions of the three brothers, all hungry for the crown. The

Resident took advantage of this mutual rivalry and bitterness. Early in 1889 a plot was conceived between Colonel Nisbet, Raja Amar Singh, and the Revenue Member of the Maharaja's Council. When the plot matured, Raja Amar Singh informed the Maharaja that "certain letters have been found which prove the Jammu family to be in league with Russia and Dulip Singh. The Maharaja solemnly denied the genuineness of the letters but this was to no purpose. The Raja told him to his face that he had already told the Resident that the writing appeared to be that of His Highness though the signature was doubtful. Besides, about 34 letters were alleged to have been written by the Maharaja which, among other things, revealed a design set on foot to murder Mr. Plowden, the British Resident, his own brothers, and a Maharani. The Maharaja was stunned to hear this astounding news but with great composure of mind declared that if his own brothers were determined to ruin him with false accusation, he would submit to his fate. His Highness did not take his meals for two days. He was much overpowered, and in his frenzy he saw no way of escape except to give his consent to such arrangements as were proposed to him.

The rest of the story is briefly told. The Resident who, be it remembered, had only sent threatening messages through the Raja, now prepared the draft of an edict on the basis of which His Highness was asked to issue an "*irsad.*" This was a virtual deed of abdication and His Highness

persistently refused to sign it. Another serious threat, and the next morning, 27th Phagan, 1945, (March 1889) a vernacular translation of the Resident's draft was made out and His Highness' signature obtained.

According to the "*Irsad*" the Council of Ministers was to exercise all administrative powers in all departments of the State for a period of five years. Any vacancies in the Council were to be filled up at His Highness' desire but by the Government of India. The President of the Council was to be appointed from among His Highness' full brothers. The Maharaja was not to interfere in the management of the State for the period of five years.

The Council, or rather the Resident who was to supervise its work, became the virtual ruler of the country. Only they could not grant any *jagir* or enter into a treaty or agreement with any State or the Government of India. The Maharaja's palaces were left immune from the control of the Council, and it was there that he now became a virtual prisoner, "cribbed, cabined and confined."

In an autographed letter which he sent to the Viceroy in May 1889, Maharaja Partap Singh asserted that "the treasonable letters were forgeries." He protested in strong and pathetic language against the harsh treatment to which he had been subjected; denied that he had resigned his rulership; begged for a further opportunity of ruling his own dominions and, in a not unnatural frenzy, besought Lord Lansdowne to restore him and

thus save him from present ignominy, "to shoot him through the heart as life had become unsupportable."

Much excitement was caused in India and in England by an announcement in the press that the Maharaja of Kashmir had been found guilty of treasonable activities and that there was ample evidence to prove his treachery. It was said further that the Maharaja, conscious of his guilt, had abdicated and placed his letter of resignation in the hands of the British authorities. When, however, the autographed letter of the Maharaja appeared in the press, the public was shocked and the princes began to shake in their shoes all over India. What startled the people of India was the publication in the columns of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of the document containing the opinion of H. M. Durand about Kashmir, already quoted herein.* It showed that there was so much intrigue surrounding the affair. The Viceroy was very much perturbed to read the document in the press. But the *Patrika* defended itself with its wonted dignity and outspokenness.

"The object of the publication of the document was to put before the Viceroy, who is a new comer, the real facts of the Kashmir case. The Viceroy has brought certain charges against the Maharaja of Kashmir, upon the strength of secret and *ex parte* reports from Mr. Plowden and the Foreign Secretary. Our object in publishing the document was to show that those who had persuaded him to believe in the guilt of the Maharaja and to cause his deposition, were, even

* See page 30.

before the advent of His Excellency, hankering after 'the whole thing'."

Kashmir *Imbroglio* became the talk of the day. It roused the indignation of all fair-minded men. The matter was taken up in the House of Commons where Charles Bradlaugh supported the cause of the Maharaja. The liberal statesmen considered it a breach of faith on the part of the Government of India to treat a feudatory Prince in such a shabby manner. In a forceful and spirited letter every sentence of which was characterised by candour and truthfulness, William Digby, a wise and large-hearted Englishman, strongly protested against this high-handedness of the British authorities to Sir Ughtred Kay Shuttleworth and advocated the cause of the poor Maharaja.* In his indignation Digby rightly observed :

"Indian Government procedure towards feudatory princes is an advance on Jedburgh justice which hanged a man and then proceeded to inquire whether he was guilty. In India condemnation takes place, sentence is carried out, and no attempt is made to ascertain whether a sentence ought to have been pronounced."

Certainly, nobody believed that the treasonable letters had been written by the Maharaja. The Government of India "were not disposed to attach any excessive importance to these letters" and the Secretary of State said that "the intercepted etters were of very little importance." Their importance was exaggerated at the outset and

* This letter along with relevant papers was subsequently published in the form of a book named *Condemned Unheard.* Most of my information is drawn from this book.

in the initial stages of the matter. As soon as the Maharaja's resignation became a settled fact, the British Government reverted to its usual charge that there was mis-government in Kashmir; that the Maharaja had not carried out the reforms proposed by the Viceroy; that there was no money in the State Treasury and that the administration was corrupt. In his letter William Digby has proved that all these charges were false, and the only motive that prompted the British to take such a drastic action was that they wanted the control of the State in order to safeguard their Empire against any aggression on the North-Western Frontier from Afghanistan or from Czarist Russia through the Gilgit District.

The Council appointed by the Maharaja in his *Irsad* or the 'voluntary resignation' was a nominal one. In the very constitution of the Council, *i.e.*, rules made for its guidance, it was ordered that their deliberations could be vetoed by the Resident in Kashmir. They were careful to pass only such resolutions as would meet with his approval ascertained beforehand. None of the members of the Council except one knew English, yet the minutes of the proceedings of the Council were maintained in that language!

Maharaja Partap Singh was in this manner deprived of all his power of rulership and the Political Resident became the virtual ruler of the State. Gilgit was forthwith fortified and British troops were sent to that district. The Government of India attempted to convince the world that these

arrangements had been made because of the inefficiency of Partap Singh to rule and his unwillingness to introduce reforms to ameliorate the lot of the half-naked peasants and famishing artisans of the State. But the publication of the document by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* exposed the whole matter. Besides, there were Britishers themselves who released the truth. An anonymous writer in *The Times* of London, one who had worked in the country for nearly ten years, (was it Frederick Drew?) said:

"Then it is said Kashmir is of no military importance; that the British Government do not cast greedy eyes on it. Blame me as you will, but record it for yourself, unless there is a decided change of policy, before long Kashmir will soon be as much British India as is now Burma.

"And is the country of no military importance? I think the military authorities in India consider otherwise. Why, the first instructions issued to me ten years ago, were to make a 'gun carriage road' through the mountains. Is there not a road being projected now to the utmost corner of the kingdom, with vast sums of money being spent on it, solely for military purposes? Has the Maharaja not been repeatedly threatened with a military cantonment, to be placed in the most favourable situation in the valley?"

E. F. Knight has written to the same effect. He had taken part in the expedition which was sent under Colonel Durand to the frontier to subjugate the Conjouts in 1891 when hostilities again broke out in the frontier.

"The value of Gilgit to the Kashmir State commanding as it does the Indus valley and mouth of Hunza river, and so holding in check the unruly tribes on either side is obvious enough; but it is only recently that the great strategical im-

portance to the Empire of this position has been fully realized. This region is now attracting some attention. The Russian explorers are exploring the passes of the Hindukush on the Northern side. They have crossed the range too at several points, trespassed into the territories of our allies ........Now whatever position we take up with regard to the debatable land beyond Hindukush there can be no doubt as to what our course of action should be on the Southern slope. Our influence should at least extend up to that great mountain range which forms the natural frontier of India. It is necessary for the safeguarding of our Empire that we should at any rate hold our side of the mountain gates but unless we looked to it Russia would soon have both sides under her control."*

At one time it was seriously suggested by some that the words of the Treaty of Amritsar, namely, "the hilly or mountainous country, with its dependencies, situated eastward of the river Indus and westward of the river Ravi", did not include Gilgit, and so it should not be in the possession of the Dogras. But evidently this was not the spirit of the Treaty and only showed colossal ignorance of geography on the part of those who signed it.

Knight wanted the whole of Kashmir to be under the British. This is what he says:

"The climate of this Paradise of Asia appears to be well adapted to the European constitution. The few English children who have been born and brought up here are so strong and rosy cheeked as if they have been bred at home; while there is no necessity for their leaving the country when they have attained a certain age, the separation between parents and children, which forms for our people the great drawback to an Indian career being quite avoidable in Kashmir. Had we not sold this magnificent country a great military cantonment

---

* *Where Three Empires Meet*, page 268.

would no doubt have been long since established here. This would not only have been most advantageous from a strategical point of view but would have avoided much of the sickness and mortality which thins the ranks of our white army in India."*

And Knight was not all alone in thinking like this. All Imperialists thought likewise and cast greedy eyes on Kashmir. Maharaja Partap Singh had to become a pathetic spectator of his own misery for several years not because of misgovernment and corrupt administration in his country, which undoubtedly existed as he himself openly admitted in his communications to the Viceroy, but because Kashmir valley was wanted by the British. What is surprising in this particular instance and in other similar instances of intervention by the Government of India in the internal affairs of an Indian State is not the discovery of maladministration, which is always there, but the coincidence of this discovery with Imperialistic self-interest; and, where this is not concerned, the adoption by them of a policy of indifference or connivance, or giving the Indian Princes plenty of rope. The Residency remained in charge of the affairs for a pretty long time but, finding that they could not in the teeth of hostile public opinion prove successful in annexing Kashmir nor turning it into military cantonment, the Government of India restored the Maharaja to his throne with full powers in 1905.

A Political Agent had been posted at Gilgit in 1877 to watch the Imperial interests in the Frontier.

---

**Ibid*, page 34.

His papers used to pass through the Foreign Office of the Maharaja. The Agency was withdrawn in 1881. It was re-established in 1889 when the Residency became the master of the whole land, and ever since the Political Agent has been directly under the Government of India. He wields supreme command over the tribal chiefs as well as the people of the district. The civil administration was normally carried on by the State Government till August 1935 when it was leased to the Government of India,—a recent change about which I shall have to speak in its place.

While writing about these warlike tribes of Gilgit I cannot but admire the love of independence that they showed again and again by making great efforts to keep their country free. They had lived a communal life for ages past and unlike the people of Kashmir had never known a foreign master before. In fact even at the end of the last century there were some small republics in the Frontier. It is interesting to read how they functioned. Writing about them Drew says :

"There is a general assembly of the people, called *Sigas*, which decides on almost every matter. It is called together by beat of drum; men, old and young, attend it, but not women; none who have the right to attend are allowed to be absent, under pain of fine. In this assembly the rights of a minority are carefully guarded. I have been told that if even one man, supposing him to be of any consideration, objects to a policy, it cannot be carried out; the assembly is adjourned for a few days, and in the interval effort is made either to convince the objector or to modify the proposal; then meeting, they have perhaps again to adjourn; but in time something or other is sure to be arranged.

"The executive consists of a few men, may be five or six, chosen by the people in their assembly. These are called *Joshtero* in the Dard language. They are chosen for their wisdom: but here as elsewhere wealth seems to have influence to convince the people of the wisdom of those who possess it. The office of *Joshtero* is not hereditary; the *Joshteros* must be in general accord with the assembly else they will be displaced. The *Joshteros* deliberate together on a policy, but cannot carry it out without the consent of the assembly of the people, which they themselves call together. The *Joshteros* are also arbitrators to settle disputes of water and wood, and what not.

"Where the valley is large, like, for instance, Darel, each village has its own *Sigas*, or assembly, which settles the particular affairs of that village, while for matters of more general policy the *Joshteros* of all the villages first meet, and make among themselves a plan to propose, and then a general parliament is called: that is, the people themselves of all the villages together meet to hear and decide. If all the villages cannot agree on one policy, then each is free to pursue its own without severing the federal bond. Thus I have heard that some villages have joined with one power, have agreed to pay tribute, while others of the same valley have done the same to the rival power. But there must be some limit to this. They could not, of course, actively join on opposite sides."

With such institutions still existing it must have appeared revolting to the people of the Frontier that outsiders should come and occupy their native land. They valiantly fought the Dogras and turned them out whenever an opportunity offered itself. They had heard about the coming of the British and how they had conquered India. They were determined not to allow any Britisher to set foot on their soil. The Raja of Hunza refused to allow the Commission sent to demarcate the territories of the Maharaja in 1847 to enter his boundaries.

Poor Northerners, little did they know at that time that before long they would be completely under the suzerainty of British Imperialism.

I have discussed this episode in Kashmir politics at some length only to show how from almost the very moment that the Treaty of Amritsar was signed the British did not hesitate to reduce it to a scrap of paper. If during the time of Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh they were not able to cut it to pieces it was only because they either wanted the co-operation and alliance of these Rajput Chiefs or did not know the importance and value of the country. Soon after that ill-fated Afghan War in 1877, the British realized the strategical position of the State and then no treaty was sacred enough to be broken to achieve their end. I have noted how both Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh rendered valuable services to the British in 1857 when there was a widespread rising all over India against them as also in 1877 when a foreign power had come into clash with the Government of India. These strong proofs of loyalty and co-operation did not help the Dogras when the British made up their mind to carry out their intention.

Nowadays British Imperialism in season and out of season emphasizes and exaggerates the sanctity of these treaties, *sanads* and engagements to thwart the constitutional progress of the people of the States. No advance is allowed even when people living in them clamour for it. The Princes put down these demands with ruthless hands; and the British Government express their inability to do anything

because the Treaties, they say, do not allow them to meddle in the internal administrations of the States! How the Treaty of Amritsar could be repeatedly ignored and easily put aside without any qualms of conscience when Imperial interests demanded it has been made abundantly clear from what I have said above.

During the earlier period of the Dogras the people of Kashmir suffered much misery. It is true that Pax Brittanica gave them outward peace which was lacking during the rule of either the Pathans or the Sikhs. But this peace at best helped the upper classes of the people in general and the upper classes of the Hindus in particular to consolidate and fatten themselves at the expense of the masses. The masses did not make any progress, but, economically, they became poorer. The land was in a dilapidated condition in the reigns of Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh. Taxes were almost as exorbitant as in the times of the Pathans and the Sikhs. Revenue was collected in kind and sepoys were despatched to the villages in advance at the time of the harvest to collect it. As the sepoys themselves were not paid their dues which remained in arrears for several months, one can imagine what havoc they must have been creating in the villages while collecting the rent. A system was prevalent by which the State itself farmed a part of the lands. Advances were made annually to persons employed for the purpose, and it was notorious that they embezzled the money and cultivated the land with forced labour and with seed extorted from the villagers. There was a heavy

octroi duty on rice brought into Srinagar. The Government itself was the principal grain dealer and fixed the price of the rice as it liked. While they would sell their own *shali* at this fixed rate, the zemindar had to defray the octroi duty out of his price. There were strange taxes. Such, for instance, was a tax on the sale of horses called *Zar-i-nakhas*, which amounted to fifty per cent of the purchase money.

Corruption was rampant in every department and the brunt of it fell on the poor peasant in the village. The corrupt official was not looked down upon as a contemptible human being. He was respected in society and the Government never tried to check him. Nay, he was encouraged as an instance will show. Every village community in Kashmir had a *Zilladar* or *Harkara* whose business it was to report the misdeeds of his fellows. The Durbar affected to look on these officials as State Police. But as sometimes they were women and had no power beyond reporting, spies would be the better name for them. They were paid by a cess of 1½ per cent on the gross produce of the land. Once it occurred to a Vizier of the Maharaja that the *Zilladars* were making too much money and he made their chief, the *harkara bashi* (Head Reporter of News), pay an annual sum to the treasury which at one time rose to 60,000 *chilki* rupees (Rs. 37,500). The *harkaras* had full liberty to extort the money as best as they could. The condition in other departments was the same.

Then there was that obnoxious system of forced

labour. As if the difficulties mentioned above were not enough for the much abused cultivator, he was every now and then impressed into *begar* (forced labour) by the State officials. Poor people were dragged like slaves out of their houses against their will to carry loads, etc., and were never paid for their labour. This evil practice continued during the Residency raj. What it was like may best be described in the words of Dr. Arthur Neve :

"I was at Islamabad, endeavouring to fight an epidemic of cholera by sanitation, and noticed coolies collecting from all the surrounding region, each with his blanket, spare grass-shoes, his carrying crutch, and light frame of sticks and rope in which to carry the load upon his back. And I was present at the great concourse on a green meadow in front of the mosque when a sort of farewell service was held for those starting on this perilous journey. Loud was the sobbing of many and fervid the demeanour of all as, led by the *mullah*, they intoned their prayers and chanted some of their special Ramazan penitential psalms. Even braver men than the Kashmiris might well have been agitated at such a time, when taking farewell of their loved ones! Who would till their fields? What would happen during their long absence to their wives and children? To what perils would they themselves be exposed in the snowy passes of that deadly Gilgit district?"*

Knight has described it more graphically. He says :

"Many thousands of villagers have been driven off every year to toil as carriers of burdens on the Gilgit road. Gilgit is a name of terror throughout the State. An enormous transport service is needed, to supply the garrisons on the northern frontier with grain; and the Kashmir authorities have been utterly careless of the comfort, and even of the lives, of

**Thirty Years in Kashmir*, page 140.

the unfortunate wretches who are dragged from their homes and families to trudge for months over the wearisome marches of that arid country. They fall on the road to perish of hunger and thirst, and, thinly clad as they are, are destroyed in hundreds at a time by the cold on the snowy passes. When a man is seized for this form of *begar,* his wives and children hang upon him, weeping, taking it almost for granted that they will never see him more. A gang of these poor creatures, heavily laden with grain, toiling along the desert crags between Astore and Gilgit, on a burning summer day, urged on by a sepoy guard, is perhaps as pitiable a spectacle as any to be seen on the roads of the Siberia. But these are not convicts and criminals, they are Mussulman farmers, harmless subjects of the Maharaja."

Again :

"Most of the *begar* has to be carried on in the summer months, when the passes are open, at the very season that the villagers are needed in their fields, the crops suffering from their absence. It is then that the grasping official swoops down on a district, and while raising the complement of men required by the State, levies blackmail from all the others. It has been calculated that for one man who is taken on this forced labour, ten purchase their immunity from the officials, as much as one hundred rupees being paid in some instances. The village is thus impoverished and rendered incapable of paying its share of revenue to the State.

"The *begar* and its accompanying blackmail assumes many forms. Thus recently, when a dozen carpenters were required for Government work in a distant region, every carpenter in Srinagar was impressed by the police and had to pay for his liberty. Sometimes all the men of a trade, the bricklayers, for instance, getting wind that it is intended to make one of these raids upon them, fly from the capital to the mountains for a time public and private building work coming to a standstill until they return."

After reading this one is pained to find Knight justifying the system by saying that *begar* is a just and useful institution ; that there is no hardship in

properly conducted and legitimate forced labour; and that it could not be abolished by a stroke of the pen. But an imperialist like Knight was helpless in this. He knew that the Britishers were in virtual possession of the country at that time (1891) and were themselves guilty of the crime. As a matter of fact they were party to it. This appeared in the *Statesman* of April 1, 1890:

"A correspondent, whose information is unquestionable, writes to say that on the departure of Colonel Nisbet, the Resident, for Srinagar, all his baggage was sent by the Maharaja's private route at State expense, though that gentleman himself went *via* Murree. Now, when we come to consider that the *begar* system flourishes in Kashmir in its worst form, and that the carriage of a whole houseful of furniture means the impressing of hundreds of poor unoffending peasants all along the route, not for a day or two, but for weeks together, it is, to say the least, inexplicable how an officer of Colonel Nisbet's standing could be induced to accept such assistance. That he should draw any help at all is contrary to the best traditions of English rule, but that he should do so at the expense of a lot of miserable villagers—for State expense virtually resolves itself into that—is scandalous. Were the people employed on Colonel Nisbet's work paid by him? Nor is this the only point on which Colonel Nisbet's doings in Kashmir are challenged—doings which, though not without precedent, are none the less regrettable. It has often been a reproach to the British administration that political officers of high merit and integrity should place themselves under indirect pecuniary obligations to the Princes whose interests they are supposed to watch. Thus it is well known that at Sialkot—for he never resides at the Maharaja's capital, where there is a Residency—our gallant Colonel lives in a house belonging to the State; the whole of this is furnished at State expense, and certainly a quarter of the expenditure is defrayed from the selfsame source. Even in distant Lahore

he is provided with a finely furnished house and carriages, while at Srinagar it is impossible to estimate the amount expended for Residency purposes. Not that Colonel Nisbet is alone to blame in this matter. His predecessors have all more or less been guilty of it; but, as he is said to be a man of high spirit and as, moreover, his appointment to Kashmir was accompanied by trumpet blasts of applause, he might have been more careful in thus risking exposure."

This, then, was the condition of the people of Kashmir in the closing years of the last century. Nature also did not favour them. I have mentioned the great famine of 1877 when hundreds of thousands of people died of starvation and whole villages were ruined. Kashmir is a country in which, with ordinary foresight, there should be no famine. But where corruption had entered the very marrow of the officials such foresight was impossible. But, whatever may be said about the causes of the famine, the responsibility for the appalling waste of human lives that followed rests entirely on the Dogra rule and its officials. The famine was followed by a terrible earthquake in 1885, when thousands of houses collapsed all over the valley and innumerable people died under the debris or were severely injured. The finances of the State were in disorder which was increased by the extravagance and squandering of the revenues of the State in a most reckless and improvident manner by the Maharaja and his underlings. There was no fixed privy purse, no regular budget, and no assessment of revenue. Mere will of the ruler was the law in this behalf. It was not strange, therefore, that the Treasury had become empty and, at the

death of Maharaja Ranbir Singh, money was brought from the Palaces and put into the Treasury to pay the salaries of subordinate officials.

As regards the cultural progress of the people during the period of the Dogras nothing substantial was achieved. The state of stagnation that had set in during the reign of the Pathans and the Sikhs continued. Barring Ranbir Singh, little attempt was made by any other ruler to raise the cultural level of the people. Some Kashmiri poets however flourished during this period. Out of these mention may be made of Mahmud Gami, author of a Kashmiri version of *Panj Ganj*, Walli Ullah Mattu who wrote the legend of *Himal* ; Pir Maqbul Shah Kralwari who wrote the romance called *Gulrez* ; and Wahab Pare who retold the *Shahnama* of Firdausi in Kashmiri. The most famous among Hindus are Parmananda, his disciple Lakshman, Prakash Ram and Krishen Dass. Parmanand of Matan is author of *Radha Syayam Vara Sudama Charitra* and *Shiva Lagan* besides numerous devotional and philosophical short poems. His profound mysticism makes his poems very obscure, but their obscurity does not detract from their popularity among the Hindus of Kashmir. His disciple, Lakshman Ji of Nagam, is the author of a Kashmiri version of *Nala Damayanti* besides several devotional poems. Prakash Ram of Kurigam is famous for his *Ramayana* in Kashmiri. Krishan Dass of Vanpuh is the author of *Shiva Lagan* published by the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal through Sir George Grierson, of the Linguistic Survey of India fame, and of numerous delightful devotional poems. A Muslim

poet of to-day writing under the pen-name of Mahjoor is very famous among the living poets and has so far written dozens of lyrical poems which are sung far and wide.

In a historical survey of times nearer one's own, one is apt to lose the proper historical perspective and events nearer one's own time loom large. It may also be said that during these transitional times in the northern parts of India, the general level of administration in the outlying parts of British India was hardly higher than in Jammu and Kashmir, and that in most Indian States conditions were even much worse. This may, however, explain but it cannot justify all that was done or left undone. But, it must be said that *begar* was a legacy from the Muslim times, that confiscation of mosques and the marriage tax on the Muslims were a legacy from the Sikhs. There is also enough historical material to prove that mosques were confiscated by the Sikhs for political and not religious reasons. Whatever harshness was shown by the Government cannot directly be attributed to religious intolerance. In this respect, if in no other, the Dogra times were more welcome than the preceding regimes. There was no demolition of mosques as there had been a large-scale demolition of temples. At some places in Jammu Province the right of *Azan* could not be freely exercised owing to the opposition of the Hindu Rajputs and the connivance of the subordinate Hindu officials; but I may say it with regard to the Muslim masses generally, as I said with respect to the Hindus under Muslim rule, that their troubles

were not due to their religious belief or creed but to the fact that they belonged to lower classes. The Muslim upper classes lived an easy life as did the Hindu upper classes, while lakhs of the Hindu masses, the co-religionists of the Dogra Rulers, eked out only a miserable existence.

## CHAPTER III

# Before the Year 1931

On 25th September, 1885, when Maharaja Partap Singh formally ascended the *gaddi* in the open Durbar, he announced certain reforms in the administration of his country. The system of farming a part of the land by the State itself was given up and the customs duty on rice abolished. The organization of *Harkaras* was disbanded and soldiers were no more to be paid in kind or allowed free rents instead of salaries. There were other minor concessions, such as remission of the tax on the sale of horses and on plying of *ekkas* from Jammu to Sialkot.

Soon after his accession the Maharaja, in 1887, appointed Mr. Wingate, an official of the Government of India, to make a regular settlement of the lands. He remained in Kashmir for two years and was succeeded in 1889 by Mr. (afterwards Sir) Walter Lawrence as Settlement Commissioner of the State. Sir Walter completed his work within a period of seven years. He has written a very

interesting book, *The Valley of Kashmir*, which shows how deeply he had studied the people of Kashmir and the conditions they were living in during the period.

Owing to the exorbitant taxes and the loot of the corrupt officials of the Government most of the cultivators had given up their lands and abandoned the profession of cultivation. It was with great difficulty that Lawrence could persuade people to take possession of lands. With the bitter experience of the treatment that the authorities meted out to the possessors and cultivators of the soil, city-dwellers and the peasants alike refused to accept the offer of the Settlement Commissioner in the beginning. Ultimately Lawrence's great powers of persuasion succeeded, and he was able to parcel out the land among the people.

The land was parcelled out but its proprietorship in the Kashmir Province and the Frontier Districts was retained by the Maharaja, and land-holders, whether they cultivated or only possessed land as *Chekdars*, did so as 'tenants-at-will.' In very rare cases were they declared to be occupancy tenants. All these people had the right to occupy land so long as they paid the revenue as it fell due but they could neither sell nor mortgage it. Tenants-at-will held land subject to the will of the proprietor, who could eject them at any time. They were of two kinds, namely, (1) those who held land direct from a landholder or the State and (2) those who held land under occupancy tenants of class (1). In Kashmir occupancy tenants consisted mainly

of those tenants who held land at the time of Lawrence's Settlement and had since been declared by a competent court to be such. In the cities and towns of Kashmir and the frontier districts people were given the rights of selling or mortgaging the land. In almost the whole of the Jammu Province, excepting the three *tehsils* of Ramnagar, Basohli and Mirpore, the people were declared to be proprietors of land which was parcelled out to tenants. In these three *tehsils* land-holders were *malguzars* and enjoyed the rights of selling or mortgaging it. This is a glaring instance of the differential treatment that the people of Kashmir Province received under Dogra Rule—a case of provincial prejudice. This was the first time in the history of Kashmir that people lost proprietorship of their own land.

On the recommendation of Lawrence land revenue was realized partly in cash and partly in kind, care being taken that the latter was so fixed as to cause the least hardship to the cultivators. But the system of obtaining it partly in kind has often led to grave abuses. The sepoys who used to coerce the cultivators were removed. *Begar* was theoretically abolished but it continued in its full vigour in practice. All those lands which were not occupied at the time of the first Settlement were declared *khalsa*, *i.e.*, belonging to the State. As to how exorbitant the revenue fixed was the following will be read with interest:

"The standard for fixing revenue in places where Govern-

ment did not enjoy proprietary rights was the same as in the Punjab, namely, half net assets or half the profits of the proprietor from land cultivated by tenants-at-will. To arrive at the percentage represented by half net assets some deductions were made from the gross produce, 8 per cent to 10 per cent altogether, on account of customary payments from the common harvest heap before division. This left the divisible produce at about 90 per cent. At the prevailing rent rate of half the produce the net profits of the proprietors would be 45 per cent of the gross produce which could leave the share of the state at 22½ per cent of the gross produce. Where cash rents were common, which was seldom the case, another set of 'half net assets' was obtainable by the simple process of dividing by two the average net cash rent per acre of a given class of land. Where the state held proprietary rights in all land, as in Kashmir, it was in theory entitled to half of the gross produce, which it actually took before the first regular settlement, but this was changed subsequently, and the standard fixed at 30 per cent of the gross produce."*

The condition of industries grew worse than ever. In the first chapter of this volume I have said that King Zain-ul-Abidin introduced several industries in Kashmir, notable among them being shawl, silk and paper-making. The biggest of these industries was undoubtedly that of shawl-manufacture. Some authorities are inclined to think that this industry was known in Kashmir long before King Zain-ul-Abidin. The author of *Kashmir and Its Shawls* tells us that "a whole people do not learn to weave such stuffs as Kashmeerees have so long turned out, in a day or year or even in centuries." † A French writer has the following remarks on the

*Annual Administration Report of Jammu and Kashmir State for the Samvat 1995-96, page 13.

†"*Kashmir and Its Shawls*," page 16.

ancient origin of the shawls :—

"But it must not be inferred that it is the produce of modern civilisation. The Indian shawl dates four thousand years back, and the shawl cloth of Babylonia, the silky textures of Ruth, the mantles of Thamar, and the long pieces of cloth with which Biblical characters were clothed were no more and other than the shawls of manufacture of which Asia enjoyed a monopoly. India especially produced them by means of precious wool obtained from animals bred on an Asiatic soil, such as the sheep of Kashmir, the goats of Angora, Kirman and Tibet, and the camels of Bokhara."*

Be that as it may, it is a settled fact that in the days of King Zain-ul-Abidin the industry was well organised and received every encouragement from the Government. Whatever view one might hold of the politics of the Muslim Period, it cannot be denied that the shawl-industry flourished under the Sultans. Even in the reign of the Pathans its progress was maintained and its reputation upheld. As early as 1519 " the Kashmir fabrics, even of the finer kind, must have been known in the West of Europe as may be inferred from the tradition that the light veil fastened by a thin golden thread over the forehead, covering the back of the head and falling on the shoulders, of Leonardo de Vinci's famous portrait of Mona Lisa, wife of Francesco of Giocondo, a citizen of Florence, was in reality one of those earlier Kashmir fabrics that could be drawn through a lady's ring as a test of its fineness." The Mughal Emperors took special interest in the development of this industry. In the *Ain-i-Akbari* Abul Fazl has recorded that " by the attention

*Quoted in *Kashmir and Its Shawls*, page 17.

of His Majesty, the manufacture of the shawls in Kashmir is in a very flourishing state." The King introduced the custom of wearing two shawls, one under the other which was a considerable addition to their beauty. There can be little doubt that such patronage liberally bestowed did much to foster the manufacture of shawls in Kashmir. It is interesting to note that Abul Fazl has quoted the prices of different shawls as ranging between Rs. 2 and Rs. 1,200 each. Bernier tells us that in his time "the Kashmiris possessed an almost exclusive and very considerable manufacture of shawls made in *prodigious numbers* attracting trade and money on which even little children were engaged." He alludes to futile attempts made at Patna, at Agra and at Lahore to imitate these shawls and adds, "The produce of the foreign looms has never equalled that of Kashmir in its delicate softness."

It is not precisely known how Kashmir shawls were introduced in the West. It is said that they were first brought to the notice of the French ladies by officers of the army of Egypt who obtained some there and sent them to Paris, but it is beyond dispute that their importation created quite a revolution in the toilet of fashionable ladies. "This fine, silky web of wool," says Larousse, "worked with fanciful flowers, distinguished by the tints of its colours, its singular designs, those strange palms draped in shades of great varieties, those borders formed of tortuous lines crossing each other in endless devices, all combine to inspire, at the

very sight of a shawl, those who see it with a desire to possess it. Fashion adopted it, protected it, and it soon became the indispensable item of an elegant wardrobe with all those who could afford to purchase and thus aspire to be considered well dressed. Woe to the husbands whose limited incomes would not admit of making their wives a present of a shawl! Double woe to those ladies whose husbands were too poor or too stingy to afford their wives the gratification of their wishes."*

The Governments of Western Europe took advantage of this furore and imposed prohibitive duties on this merchandise. The British Government imposed as high as eighty per cent import duty and yet a shawl of the finest kind would sell at £500 each, of course duty included. It was no wonder that in these circumstances spurious products were manufactured outside Kashmir and sent in the name of the country to various European centres. In 1850 an experiment was therefore made by Frenchmen to derive advantage by purchasing the genuine article from Kashmir itself. Agents were employed who would visit the valley every year regularly and purchase collectively to the amount of from four to six lakhs of rupees. I quote below the value of Kashmir shawls that were exported from India to all parts of the world 1851—1865:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1851 | £171,709 | 1853 | £215,659 |
| 1852 | £146,270 | 1854 | £170,153 |

*Quoted in *Kashmir and Its Shawls*, page 22.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1855 | £197,890 | 1861 | £351,093 |
| 1856 | £209,279 | 1862 | £459,441 |
| 1857 | £290,640 | 1863 | £303,157 |
| 1858 | £227,618 | 1864 | £275,391 |
| 1859 | £310,027 | 1865 | £254,498 |
| 1860 | £252,828 | ... | ... |

The Sikhs levied exorbitant tax on the manufacture of shawls charging each shop up to Rs. 120 per year. The great pestilence and famine of 1819 decimated the number of the shawl manufacturers. But, as Moorcroft observed in 1824, lacs of people were still employed in this industry. When Kashmir was ceded to the Dogras and handed over to their tender mercies it was in full bloom. If we add to the values quoted above the quantity that was absorbed by Indians themselves, it will easily be conceded that this industry alone brought half a crore of rupees to the people of Kashmir when Kashmir came under the rule of the Dogras.

But where has this industry gone? How many people were employed in it at the time when Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the throne in 1925 at the death of Partap Singh? The answer can only be most disappointing for the patriot and the well-wisher of the State. It is a sad commentary on the economic progress of Kashmir during the reign of Dogras that such a gigantic industry which supported lakhs of poor people and supplemented the meagre income of a large part of the peasantry by keeping them employed during idle months of winter, became almost extinct by 1925. The *charkha*

which was a prominent part of the household property in Kashmir, is rarely visible now and has been turned out from the cities and towns for good.

The Government of Kashmir tell us that the Franco-German War of 1870 gave a fatal blow to the shawl trade in the West from which it could not revive. But this is no defence when we know that such blows had been dealt upon the industry prior to 1870. If the market in the West was lost temporarily a Government could create new market elsewhere. But this could be achieved only if the Government were sympathetic and wide awake. What the condition of shawl weavers was in the times of the Dogras and before the industry was substantially ruined has been described by Drew thus :—

"A large proportion of the town inhabitants are shawl weavers whose handicraft has made Kashmir to be familiarly known over the whole both of India and Europe. These men spend long days in the low crowded factories where the air is very impure especially in winter; they keep the place close for warmth, and in the absence of ventilation the atmosphere becomes very highly vitiated. This and the constancy of the sedentary employment has acted on the physique of the shawl weavers; they are a class whose sallow complexions and weak frames contrast strongly with the robustness of most other Kashmiris."

It is a shame that even the Indian market was gradually lost. It is no wonder that after several centuries of brisk trade the shawl manufacture remained of no importance in Kashmir. Thousands of weavers left the valley early during this century and established themselves at Lahore, Amritsar,

Agra and other less important centres. Shawls are not mentioned now as an important merchandise the export of which would yield to the State a revenue sufficient to deserve mention in the Administration Report of the Government.

If this was the condition of the biggest industry, that of the smaller industries was even worse. The paper-making stopped altogether in the reign of Partap Singh. So did also the manufacture of cotton. When no encouragement was received from the Government the manufacture of *Gabbas*, *Namdas* and *Puttoo* and the ornamental arts of Srinagar, such as silver work and papier-mache also began to show signs of decay and the craftsmen were economically reduced to the very lowest level. It is beyond the scope of this book to go into any details of this degradation. I can only say that from a self-contained province Kashmir became a country totally dependent for its needs on outsiders; from an exporting nation Kashmiris became a people who largely import goods from foreign countries.

While deploring this setback in the industries of Kashmir I must admit that it was in the reign of the Dogras that Kashmir perhaps for the first time in its long history got the blessing of the two big mountain roads which link it with the outside world. New avenues of trade and commerce were thus opened, but for reasons which I shall discuss a little further, not much could be achieved.

In one thing Kashmir did make progress. The Government of India was anxious to establish a

bureaucratic form of administration in the State. Although the process had already begun in the reign of Ranbir Singh, the various departments now existing have been created in the days of Partap Singh when there was the Residency raj. Almost immediately, when the Maharaja was shorn of all his royal powers, the British Political Resident through the State Council began to interest himself in opening the different bureaus to make the administration look civilised and modern. But there were few local men with the requisite qualifications available to do the jobs and fewer schools and no colleges in the State where the State subjects could have been educated for the purpose.

So men with Western education and training were imported in large numbers from the neighbouring province of the Punjab. "Armies of outsiders trailed behind the officers from the plains with no more interest than to draw as much as they could, and then to depart leaving behind their kindred as successors to continue the drain; and thus was established a hierarchy in the services with the result that profits and wealth passed into the hands of the outsiders and the indigenous subjects lost enterprise and independence." Thus at the beginning of the present century a new problem confronted the people: that of facing the outsider who had occupied every position of vantage in the administration of the country. From those early times the struggle for the rights of the people living in the State against outsiders took a definite shape. While the masses were groaning under the unbearable load of taxes and

crushing economic poverty, the upper classes felt displeased and resentful because of this foreign domination in every branch of administration. The feeling of resentment which was running underground for centuries found an outward expression, though it was not yet directed against the ruler or his administration as such. Representations were made to the Government of India who, in a letter to the Kashmir Durbar at the close of the last century, sent instructions that in the matter of State employment *Mulkies* should be given preference over the outsiders and that this principle should be strictly adhered to. This letter was circulated through all the departments of the State. But this was vague, and it did not produce any effect, owing to the fact that any outsider could call himself a *Mulki* by simply declaring himself to be one. The struggle continued ; and in 1912 A.D. a definition of 'State Subject' was formulated for the first time. A State Subject was one who had obtained an *Ijazat Nama.* Evidently, therefore, this was inadequate, and outsiders continued to be imported in even larger numbers by their kith and kin, who held the Ministers' jobs, besides almost all the posts of the Heads of Departments. In the meantime, Kashmiris had advanced in education. Early in 1905 A.D. through the strenuous efforts of Mrs. Annie Besant, some luminaries of the Theosophical Society, and Pandit Bala Kaul of the Sahib family, a Hindu College, which subsequently came to be known as the Sri Partap College, had been started at Srinagar. Another college was started by the Government in

the city of Jammu. Many young men passed through the portals of these institutions after completing their course. They imbibed the spirit of the new age. Their minds were full of the ideas of the onrushing tide of democracy in the West. They read with emotion about political movements of Turkey, Ireland, Egypt and other countries as also the part young men played in these movements. They saw, what, nearer home, young Bengal did to defeat the scheme of Lord Curzon to partition that province. Life became visible in the decayed bones of Kashmir again. Her soul began to breathe. The hearts of the people throbbed. The spirit of independence revived and with it came the desire to turn out the outsiders.

Another factor, as yet unnoticeable, was taking shape. Muslims, who form the great majority of the population of the State and who had not taken kindly to modern education, began to feel their backwardness. The cry of "down with the outsider" was raised mostly by the Hindus. Sensible Muslims did not oppose it but before taking any active part in it they wanted to make up the deficiency in the matter of education. Time and again they approached the Government to grant them some facilities enabling them to make rapid advance in the sphere of education. It appears that these requests were not heeded in the beginning. The British Government, who had become defenders of the rights of the Muslim majority against a Hindu Maharaja while proposing to deprive Partap Singh of his powers, did practically nothing to push the

Muslims on the path of literacy and education during the period Kashmir administration was under the Residency raj.

The demand of Muslims became irresistible and the Maharaja was moved at last to do something in this direction. In 1916, Mr. Sharp, then the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India, visited at the request of the Kashmir Durbar the educational institutions in the State, examined the Muslim demands, enquired into their grievances and submitted a report containing his recommendations for the guidance of the State authorities. These recommendations were sanctioned by His Highness but were lightly treated by his Ministers, and instructions issued by him were seldom followed by those in charge of the Education Department, who were invariably non-Kashmiris. As a matter of fact, soon after its publication, the report was safely put in the archives from where nobody could find it out. Fifteen years after, an official enquiry committee had to admit that "no one appears to be aware of the nature of the report submitted by the educational expert." The Muslims rightly felt aggrieved over such a state of affairs. For years they complained and protested, fretted and fumed, but all to no purpose.

Other communities were in the meantime making some progress. Especially in the Kashmir Province the Pandits were making rapid advance in education and had on this account begun to capture the offices as subordinate clerks. Kashmir Muslims became impatient. They had now many grievances

against the authorities which were collected and sent to them with no results. At this stage a bold step was taken by a few leading Kashmiri Muslims. Recklessly enough a memorial was submitted by them to Lord Reading, then Viceroy of India, when he visited Kashmir in 1924. In the course of the memorial the Muslims demanded that proprietary rights of the land should be given to the peasants; that a larger number of Mohammedans should be employed in the State Service; that steps should be taken to improve the condition of Mohammedan education in the State; that the system of *begar* should be abolished; that the work of the Co-operative Department should be extended; that all Muslim mosques in possession of the Government should be released and handed over to the Muslims. This memorial was signed by some eminent *Jagirdars* and the two *Mir Waizes* (the Religious Heads of Muslims) also affixed their signatures to it. Some demonstrations in the State-owned silk factory at Srinagar and disturbances of semi-political nature took place in the city during the summer of that year. But everything was in an embryonic form tnen and all this was put down by the authorities with a firm hand.

A committee of three official members consisting of a European, a Hindu and a Mohammedan examined the memorial and reported that there was no substance in it! Some of the memorialists were exiled and their landed property confiscated. The two *Mir Waizes* were let off with a warning, but all official privileges enjoyed by them were immediately

stopped. The demonstrators were summarily dealt with and punished.

In 1922, a State Council of Ministers was again formed to assist Maharaja Partap Singh in the administration of the country. Raja Hari Singh, heir-apparent to the throne, was put in charge of it as the Senior Member of the Council. Educated young men looked to him for help in driving out the non-State subjects when they failed to receive any encouragement in this behalf from the Maharaja himself. And the Senior Member did his best to fulfil the wishes of his people. He issued a circular order to all the departments enjoining upon them to employ only the State subjects to all ordinary vacancies. It is interesting to read what the circulars said :

"The Maharaja Sahib Bahadur has been pleased to direct that in future no non-State subject shall be appointed to any position without the express orders of His Highness-in-Council in each case. Each such proposal shall be accompanied by a full statement of reasons in writing as to why it is considered necessary to appoint a non-State subject, it being definitely stated whether there is no State subject qualified and available for the appointment proposed. In like manner no scholarships or training expenses of any kind should be granted to non-State subjects. His Highness has also directed that any infringement of this order will be very seriously dealt with.

"His Highness the Maharaja Sahib has been pleased to inform you that in future all grants of land for agricultural and house-building purpose and grant of houses and other State property shall be made to State subjects only, and every proposal to make a grant shall be accompanied by a written statement setting forth the reasons for doing so. It should be made clear to all concerned that any disobedience of these orders will be dealt with very severely and no exception will be made."

The main difficulty of determining who a State subject was still existed, and these well-intentioned circulars could not carry the educated young men any further. What was wanted was a restrictive definition. A committee of six officials and four non-officials was appointed forthwith for the purpose of defining the term according to the changed circumstances and in response to the public demand. On this committee the non-State subjects did have their due representation.

Maharaja Partap Singh died in September 1925 and, having no male heir of his own, was succeeded by his nephew Raja Hari Singh, the son of Raja Amar Singh. As Senior Member of the Council, Maharaja Hari Singh had proved of great promise. As soon as he ascended the throne he gave demonstration of his energy and enthusiasm. He took keen personal interest in the welfare of the people in the beginning of his reign. He participated in many public functions and went to the headquarters of the districts to come in touch with his subordinate officials and the masses living in the country-side. All this presaged well. The State Subject Definition Committee submitted its report in 1925. Its recommendations were readily accepted by His Highness. A definition of the term 'Hereditary State Subject' was duly formed and passed into a law on the 31st of January, 1927. According to this definition "All persons born and residing in the State before the commencement of the reign of Maharaja Gulab Singh Bahadur and also persons who settled therein before the commencement of Samvat 1942, and have since

been permanently residing," are hereditary subjects of the State. This definition was a bolt from the blue to the outsiders as it meant instantaneous stoppage of their entry into State Service, nay, into the State itself; for what use was it for adventurers to come into the State if they could not purchase agricultural or non-agricultural land, get an appointment or a scholarship or, in certain circumstances, obtain even a Government contract? Thus further influx of the non-State subjects was stopped. But what of those who were already in the State either in Government service or following different professions and trades? Some of them might get State Subject certificates by fraudulent means, but it was evident that all of them could not. So some method of evading the new law was to be found out. Intrigues were set afoot and conspiracies hatched to do this; and, as we shall see presently, it resulted in accentuating the communal feelings of the people of the State and largely contributed to turn a national fight into a communal struggle in 1931.

While the adoption of the definition of State Subject fulfilled to some extent the hopes of the rising spirit of a depressed people, signs became visible that this could not serve as a panacea for all ills. The unbridled autocracy of a Prince is a double-edged weapon. By passing the law of the definition of State Subject, no doubt, Maharaja Hari Singh stopped the jobbery and nepotism of outsiders but immediately after he ascended the *gaddi*, a sort of a Rajput oligarchy began to be formed under his shelter. Mediocre Rajputs became Heads of various

Departments of the State. The military was exclusively reserved for the Dogras, chiefly Rajputs, and more than sixty per cent of the gazetted appointments went to them. This invidious distinction became intolerable soon and voices, indistinct in the beginning, were raised in protest.

In the beginning of the year 1929, Kashmir was already seething with discontent. An intelligent observer like Sir Albion Banerji deplored the state of affairs. He was disgusted with the unimaginative mind of the Government, and resigned the post of the Foreign and Political Minister which he had held for over two years. On the 15th March, 1929, his observations on the state of affairs here as made before the representative of the Associated Press produced a deep effect on the minds of the people of Kashmir. He said:

"Jammu and Kashmir State is labouring under many disadvantages, with a large Mohammedan population absolutely illiterate labouring under poverty and very low economic conditions of living in the villages and practically governed like dumb, driven cattle. There is no touch between the Government and the people, no suitable opportunity for representing grievances and the administrative machinery itself requires overhauling from top to bottom to bring it up to the modern conditions of efficiency. It has at present little or no sympathy with the people's wants and grievances.

"There is hardly any public opinion in the State. As regards the press it is practically non-existent with the result that the Government is not benefited to the extent that it should be by the impact of healthy criticism."

Sir Albion stated that in the villages of Kashmir people were living very low economic lives

and the artisans of Kashmir were finding it very difficult to earn a living owing to the unsympathetic attitude of the Government. He advised that something should be done early to raise the standard of the masses who had fallen a prey to various abuses and evils owing to grinding poverty. As we shall presently see, the Kashmir Government disregarded this timely warning of an experienced politician like Sir Albion with fatal consequences to itself.

Before I narrate and discuss the events that followed, I should try to analyse the situation a little further. As stated already, the Jammu and Kashmir State comprises three provinces. People speaking different languages, belonging to diverse cultures and with varying modes of life reside in these three different provinces of the State. As many as fourteen dialects are spoken by them. The people of Jammu province living on the left side of the river Chenab are called Dogras* and, broadly speaking, they use Dogri though many of them also speak Punjabi. In the Kashmir Province Kashmiri is the chief language. The majority of Kashmiris is pure Aryan in blood. The people of Dardistan, as the frontier district of Gilgit is generally called, belong to the Shin and Yashkun caste of the Aryan race. They are Mohammedans and a large number of them follow H. H. the Aga Khan. Buddhists live in the eastern part of the Ladakh district. The people of the frontier speak their own dialects. Mohammedans and Sikhs are spread all over the three

*The word Dugar comes from Sanskrit *Dvigart* (between two lakes).

provinces. But Kashmiri Pandits are concentrated in the Kashmir Province. Harijans (depressed classes) are confined to the Jammu Province. Rajputs are a part of the Dogra community of Jammu. A few thousand Punjabis who have migrated to the State either as traders or as State employees are spread all over the country. The ruling family belong to the Dogra Hindu race and are Rajputs. There is therefore a lurking suspicion among all non-Dogra Hindu classes of the people that they are not treated well. Even the non-Rajput Hindus of Jummu have complained that they are being ignored. Harijans, who are theoretically a part of the Hindu community, have always been socially tyrannised over and positively suppressed. The people of Kashmir consider the Maharaja as an alien ruler. Not only do the Muslims, who have religious differences with him, not look upon him as their countryman but the Kashmiri Pandits also do not consider him as one of their own. In language, in mode of living, and in his descent he has nothing in common with the people of Kashmir and the Frontier districts. They have always felt aggrieved and felt discontented with the policy of the Government which excessively favoured the people of the Jammu Province, especially the Rajputs, at their expense. The policy of Provincial discrimination became pronounced and acute in the reign of Maharaja Hari Singh though it was there from the very beginning of the Dogra rule. Frederic Drew wrote in 1875 :

"Judged of in this capacity—that of agents and instruments of Government—we must allow to the Dogras consider-

able failings. They have little tact; they have not the art of conciliating the governed, of treating them in such a way as to attach them. Those who are high in authority have not width enough of view to see that the interests of both governors and governed may be in a great measure coincident. As a rule, they are not liked by the dependent nations even to that degree in which, with moderately good management, a ruling race may fairly hope to be liked by its alien subjects."

There are reasons to believe, as we shall see further on, that the suspicions and doubts entertained by the non-Dogra races of the State are not groundless. For the present I should like to mention one instance. To the end of Maharaja Partap Singh's reign the headquarters of the Durbar moved seasonally to the two biggest cities of the State. Jammu, the capital of the Jammu Province, used to be the winter headquarters and Srinagar, the reputed city of Kashmir, used to be the summer headquarters of the Government. But soon after Maharaja Hari Singh ascended the *gaddi*, he fixed his headquarters permanently at Jammu. This was extremely resented by the people of Kashmir, particularly by the Pandits, who were affected by the change immediately. The biggest officials, the Ministers and Heads of Departments used still to move with their camp offices to Srinagar, but low-paid clerks most of whom were Pandits and some of whom were Kashmir Muslims were left behind. Unaccustomed to it, their lives became in the excessive heat of summer months in Jammu unbearable to them. It was suspected that the arrangements were made, firstly, to force Kashmiris to relinquish their jobs and, secondly, in this way to

make their further recruitment in the higher offices difficult. It also affected the trade of Kashmir Province, to some extent. The political importance of Kashmir Province in general and Srinagar in particular was undoubtedly undermined.

A storm was raised in the press against this change ; this could be done only outside the State, as there was no local newspaper. The arrangement of fixation of headquarters did not work well but, even if it could, the Kashmiri clerks put all obstacles in its way. In the beginning the Government was obstinate but ultimately, under pressure of public opinion, it gave in and reverted to its old practice.

The people of Jammu Province were allowed to have a political organisation in the shape of the Dogra Sabha. In the name of the people the Sabha protected the interests and safeguarded the rights of the upper-class Dogras. It was a most loyal body so that even the Government servants were allowed to join it. Having found out that Dogra aristocracy wanted more voice in the administration of the State the rulers had allowed the existence of this organisation to act as a safety-valve to evaporate and discharge any dangerous agitation that might otherwise go underground. When during the twenties of this century the signs of discontent became visible in the upper classes of the people of Kashmir, the organisation was extended to that province as well. A session of the Dogra Sabha was held at Srinagar in the autumn of 1926. But for various reasons the Sabha and its aim did not cap-

ture the imagination of the people of Kashmir. This Sabha is still in existence, though only in name. Many efforts were made to infuse new blood into its old veins but without any success.

Maharaja Hari Singh had begun well and inspired the people with high hopes. The State Subject definition and its strict enforcement were great concessions to the educated classes and the nobility among the hereditary subjects, while the Raj-Tilak Boons and the Agricultural Relief Regulation were a favour bestowed on the landed classes generally. Everyone was agreed that the Maharaja meant well to his own people. As time went on, however, these hopes were not realised. Perhaps the hopes people were led to entertain were too high. The machinery of the Government could not adapt itself so quickly to the new impulse. Besides, there were no capable Ministers. They had neither vision nor acumen to observe and read what was happening around them, nor even practical sagacity or administrative intelligence. They were either mushrooms or opportunists. Perhaps sympathy for His Highness' subjects should have atoned for their inefficiency, but sympathy they lacked. The only capable Minister, Sir Albion, had to resign in disgust. Mr. G. E. C. Wakefield made a bid for supreme power by playing Disraeli to the Maharaja and was very near success, when down he came with a crash for he had overshot himself. Surrounded by a group of mediocre ministers, fit only for low intrigue and gross flattery, and because of

them, perhaps, the Maharaja became inaccessible and lost all personal touch with his people. Maharaja Partap Singh was freely, even informally, accessible, to which and to his reputation for piety, his *swadeshi* ways, and a limited privy purse, he owed not a little of his popularity with the common people. In the absence of any freedom of press, platform, or association, this inaccessibility to the people of their Maharaja coupled with the inefficiency and the antipathy of his ministers amounted in actual practice to an almost complete estrangement between the ruler and the ruled.

Moreover, the discrimination between the people of the two provinces of Jammu and Kashmir became a pronounced factor in the policy of the present rule by the end of the twenties. Rajputs were granted undue latitude in dominating the official politics of the State. It must, however, be remembered that this policy of the Government affected only the upper classes of the people. The masses in all the three provinces were equally backward. The fight for the loaves and fishes of office was carried on between the advanced sections of the society. Yet it was the only sign of any political activity during those days though the struggle took various shapes and forms.

The Rajputs were a satisfied community. They were not advanced in education. A large number of the posts, high or low, in the army were open to them. In the civil administration many appointments were filled by them though far better qualified and highly educated young men belonging

to other communities were available. One Rajput, practically illiterate, became the Head of a Department even in the year 1928 when hundreds of graduates were unemployed. In the case of certain Rajputs from outside the condition of being a State subject was relaxed.

Though Dogra Hindus, most of whom are not Rajputs, resented this, yet they were not quite dissatisfied. They are nearer to Rajputs and the Ruling Family by the community of language, religion and culture. The army is open to them and so are all the civil departments.

All other communities (I mean the upper classes among them) have been indifferently treated, even positively discouraged and suppressed. There have been provincial as well as communal bias and prejudice in this policy of the Government. For instance, the people of Kashmir and the Frontier districts, both Hindu and Muslim, who are looked upon as a subject race are not entitled to join the army. The doors of the military have been closed against them. This was not so before the Dogra Rule and even in the reign of Maharajas Gulab Singh and Ranbir Singh many Kashmiris took prominent part in expeditions to the frontier *illaqa*. Drew tells us that there was a Balti regiment in Ranbir Singh's army. But now there is no place in the army either for Kashmiris or the people of the Frontier districts because they belong to a subject race and cannot be trusted. The regiments of the Maharaja are formed either by Hindu Dogras or Muslim Dogras. Kangra

Rajputs and Gurkhas, and even Punjabi Sikhs, from outside the State can have a place in the military of our country, and are, as a matter of fact, employed in the Infantry and the Rifles. But not the Hindus nor the Muslims of Kashmir.

In the civil administration higher appointments were practically reserved for the Punjabis in the reign of Partap Singh and for Rajputs in the beginning of the present Maharaja's rule.

As I said, this policy of the Government became glaringly visible by 1929. Kashmiri Pandits are the most advanced in the matter of education. They took the greatest advantage, at the earliest opportunity, of the facilities provided by the Government. Many hundreds of young men belonging to this community obtained diplomas from the Punjab University. Many of them got petty jobs in the Government offices and many remained unemployed. This created a problem. As far back as 1920, an agitation was started in the outside press interested in the State politics against this sad state of affairs. Maharaja Partap Singh's Government was severely condemned for employing outsiders when qualified sons of the soil were available. During those days Dogras, including Rajputs joined the Pandit young men in raising this cry. It resulted in the promulgation of the Definition of State Subject. But this law mainly benefited the Rajputs and the Dogras. Kashmiri Pandits remained almost where they were. So they continued to grumble and resent. They became impatient. Writing about them,

Sir Albion said in his interview just referred to that they "form the intellectual class and are in a sense depressed because they get no opportunity of rising either in Government service or in any other field of useful activity, such as industry or commerce, with the result that they are also discontented and present a problem which requires to be seriously tackled."

Kashmiri Pandits demanded a change in the policy of the Government. In the name of the people of Kashmir they protested against discrimination and unfair treatment. But while they spoke in the name of people what they demanded was not for the benefit of the masses and the lower strata of the society, but for themselves. They wanted a share in the State Services. In fairness to them, however, let it be said that at times some of them even made a case for freedom of speech and freedom of association as also a legislature and some kind of constitutional Government. Kashmiri Pandits form only 1·6 per cent of the population of the State. They are thus in a microscopic minority. Their appeals and demands, though they reached the ears of the authorities, had but little effect on them as it was not backed by the large minority of the population of the State. It was evident that they could not carry on the propaganda by themselves with any appreciable success.

Things, however, changed when in 1930 a sufficient number of Muslim educated young men, finding themselves unemployed, began to move.

They started a reading room near Fateh Kadal in Srinagar, where most of them used to meet and discuss the current topics of the day. None of the problems absorbed them more than the one that faced them immediately, the problem of unemployment among the educated Muslims.

I have said that Pandits were resentful and sullen for having been suppressed in Government Services. It would therefore appear that there was a very good opportunity for the educated among both the communities to act jointly in the matter. But certain causes contributed to their not doing so. Firstly, the young men of the respective communities lived apart socially and there was hardly any intercommunication between them during those days. Public opinion was non-existent and public workers were unknown even to one another. There were no far-sighted and experienced public workers endowed with the gift of statesmanship to guide men towards this happy consummation. Secondly, the Pandits dominated the subordinate services in the provincial sphere, mostly the jobs of clerks. They had begun to gain a foothold in the Secretariat offices as well. They did not like easily to abandon the monopoly on the one hand and create a rival in the shape of the Muslims on the other. Class-consciousness blinded them to the fact that Muslim young men had as much right to get their legitimate share in services as they themselves had. They forgot that a few years back they had to fight desperately against non-Kashmiri domination in

the Services. Moreover, the Muslims were conscious of the fact that the Pandits manœuvred to deprive the Muslims of a share in the jobs in the subordinate departments of the offices where they had any real power or even a semblance of it. Thirdly, it was expedient to protest against only the predominance of the Pandits in the Services. Muslims would not protest in the beginning and even later, when the agitation burst forth openly, against the Rajput stranglehold on the services lest they should thereby offend the Maharaja personally. To attack the Pandit's share in the services was of course the line of the least resistance. They were nearer home, they could be instanced as the petty engines of Government corruption, and they were fellow-slaves as against the ruling class of Jammu. Fourthly, the communal Muslim propaganda which was carried from outside, chiefly the Punjab, influenced the views and activities of the Kashmiri young men. They, therefore, acted separately and by themselves in the matter.

In the summer of 1929 a representation was made to His Highness by a few moderate Muslim politicians of the Dogra Sabha, notably General Samunder Khan and Sheikh Abdul Aziz, about the inadequate representation of their community in the State Services. It appears that the Government wanted to do something at this time. According to an official report His Highness was anxious to take as many Mohammedans in the public services as possible. A private understanding

was also arrived at, and it was decided that about 50% vacancies should be reserved for them. It is useless to discuss whether there existed any sincere desire to implement this understanding, but this much is a fact that the understanding was never made public and was known, if at all, to a few non-official Muslims only.

In the beginning of 1930 His Highness went to England to attend the Round Table Conference. Under his instructions a Cabinet of four Members was formed, consisting of (1) Mr. G. E. C. Wakefield, an European, (2) Mr. P. K. Wattal a non-State Subject Hindu, and (3) General Janak Singh, a Dogra Rajput, to carry on the administration in his absence. Thakur Kartar Singh, a Dogra Rajput, worked as its Secretary. No Kashmiri and no Muslim was a member of the Cabinet. Instead of working as a happy team the members of the Cabinet conspired against one another. Everyone wanted to be popular and prove his loyalty to His Highness. Some of them seemed to be suspicious of one another. Spies were employed by at least some of them to know the others' activities. While Thakur Kartar Singh was actively busy in pushing forth the scheme of establishing a Dogra oligarchy in the State, he considered Mr. Wakefield to be a thorn in his side, as he displayed tendencies to help the Muslims.

It was at this stage that the Kashmir Government constituted an official body known as the Civil Service Recruitment Board. This Board was to replace another which had been in existence

for some time to select candidates for scholarships to prosecute their studies in foreign countries in various branches of learning. The Board notified the Rules and Regulations which would be followed in recruiting candidates for gazetted appointments and higher jobs in the services. Candidates were expected to submit various certificates and undergo a competitive test. This was resented by Muslim young men. They demanded direct recruitment for themselves. Were not non-Muslim candidates always appointed without any competitive examinations and without having to face any difficulties and obstructions which were now placed in their way? On 11th September the young men of the Fateh Kadal Reading Room sent a representation to the Cabinet to this effect. An interview was granted to the representatives of the Muslim young men. Mr. S. M. Abdullah, a newly returned M.Sc. from Aligarh, then absolutely unknown except as a frequent visitor to and an earnest member of the Reading Room, was one of the two representatives. All the three members of the Cabinet were present at the interview. Mr. Wakefield explained the principles underlying the constitution of the Recruitment Board and tried to impress upon the young representatives that it was to safeguard the interests of the educated young men that the Government had taken this step. He wanted to remove any doubts and misunderstandings which had been created in the minds of the Muslims. Mr. P. K. Wattal complained against the attitude of the Muslims whom he characterised

as ungrateful. He reminded them that some Muslim young men had been actually appointed directly to certain higher jobs in the Accountant-General's office by him.

The interview lasted more than two hours. In reply Mr. Abdulla and his colleague reiterated the arguments which had been stated in the memorial. They said that if the conditions then laid down for recruitment to higher services were not necessary till that time and even low qualified non-Muslims were appointed to responsible posts, why were these obstructions created now? They did not make any secret of the fact that Muslim young men suspected that these obstacles were put by the Government to debar the Muslims from getting their legitimate share in Government Services. The Cabinet members were adamant. They did not budge an inch from the position which they had taken. They refused to make any amendments in the rules and regulations published by the Recruitment Board. The young men approached Aga Syed Hussain, a Kashmiri Muslim who, though he was the Home Minister of the Government, had not been included in the Cabinet. They complained to him against this attitude of the Cabinet, even uttered some harsh and hot words, but with no better results. Aga Syed Hussain had little or no effective voice in the Government as he himself admitted subsequently before an official committee of enquiry. Although the Education Minister of the State, he " could not modify the rules in order to bring more

Mohammedan boys to the Normal Schools which were provided for the training of teachers and which were conspicuous by the absence of Muslims." He "could only advise the Director of Education, but had no power to interfere." It was most amazing for the Committee to hear that Aga Syed Hussain did not know anything about the reply which the Cabinet gave to the memorial. For, subsequently, a reply to the points raised in the memorial had been given by the Cabinet on 28th January 1931, which was considered unsatisfactory by the Mohammedans. The young men were sorely disappointed and discouraged. But what could they do but wait and watch ?

We must now pause a little and, against this small issue of the State Services, look on the wider field of politics.

In 1929 political gatherings of far-reaching importance were held in British India. At Lahore the Indian National Congress adopted the Resolution of Complete Independence under the Presidentship of Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru on December 31st. This was followed by the Civil Disobedience movement in which the Indian masses took a prominent part. The success that attended the movement markedly affected the people of the Kashmir State. In his Presidential Address to the annual session of the All-India Muslim League, the great philosopher-poet of the East, Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal, adumbrated what is now commonly known as the *Pakistan* Scheme. The prominent British statesmen and the Hindu poli-

ticians no doubt laughed at the idea of partitioning the country during those days, but the imagination of communally-minded Muslims, particularly of Northern India, was fired at the suggestion. It opened a pleasant scene of Pan-Islamism before them.

During the very days that the Congress was held at Lahore a convention of the workers of the States' Peoples was held in the Bradlaugh Hall under the presidentship of Barrister P. L. Chudgar. It passed several resolutions, some of which directly concerned the Kashmir Government and the people of the State.

Many young men belonging to Kashmir attended these political gatherings and were imbued with fresh ideas and a new spirit. They wanted to do something to put things right at home.

To turn back to Muslim young men. At the time when the members of the Fateh Kadal Reading Room were engaged in parleying with the Government about the Civil Service Recruitment Board, an independent movement of a similar nature had taken birth at Jammu among the educated Muslim young men of the province. An organisation known as Young Men's Muslim Association had been started there with a similar object in view. But each worked on its own initiative, the one not knowing what the other did. By the autumn of 1930 when the reports of the activities of the Reading Room and the Young Men's Association appeared in the Punjab Press, the two began negotiating with each other. Ultimately in order

to adjust their activities and produce a deeper effect they desired to coalesce. The Jammu organisation despatched their plenipotentiary to Srinagar to settle terms. It was decided that both should work jointly in the interests of the Muslim community as a whole.

We have seen that educated Muslim young men were dissatisfied and were making preparations to get their grievances redressed. They were now trying to organise themselves on an All-State basis or, at any rate, the young men living in the two capital cities of the provinces were joining hands to make a move. It is doubtful whether any of them was at this stage thinking in terms of a revolution or even a drastic change. Most of them were anxious to get a big slice in the Government Services and some of them might have been anxious to ameliorate the lot of the poorer classes, such as peasants. A few intelligent men desired small constitutional reforms. But all of them were hazy about their future programme. Little did they know that a spontaneous mass-rising unknown in the annals of the State would take place very soon in spite of them. Little did they know that historical forces had already prepared a field and they were tools in the hands of time to work a change in the political conditions of Kashmir which they could not imagine or dream about.

We must now explore other factors which contributed to the birth of the uprising before we narrate the various incidents which took place in the course of its development.

I have already discussed the miserable plight of the peasantry and the masses in the last chapter. I have said that in spite of the establishment of law and order they were overburdened with new and so far unknown taxes. On the one hand they did not and could not derive any substantial benefit from the nation-building and the utilitarian departments of the State ; on the other, the petty village officials and higher officers of the Government, being corrupt to the very core, skinned them alive by squeezing bribes out of them. They were, therefore, living on the verge of starvation and their condition was indescribably bad. Kashmir is rich in every way ; the lands are fertile and productive ; the forest abound in great wealth, and the orchards are full of fruits. In fact nature is bountiful. But in the midst of this plenty human beings are starved and die a premature and miserable death because they cannot partake of these gifts of nature bestowed on mankind without distinction of high or low, creed or caste. No wonder that in these circumstances there was hatred in the minds of the masses for the extant order of things. Instinctively they wanted a change as did their forefathers whenever conditions had become unbearable in the past. But being ignorant and backward, they did not know how to bring about this change. The masses in the Kashmir province are solely Muslim, but in the Jammu province they are both Hindu and Muslim. Their problems are more economic and social than political, but certainly not religious.

The Muslim *bourgeoisie* had their own grievances against the Government. The loss of Muslim Rule in Kashmir was and is their grievance No. 1. As I mentioned in the earlier part of this book while discussing the past history, the struggle which has been labelled religious persecution of Hindus by Muslims was in essence the suppression of the Hindu upper classes by the Muslim *bourgeoisie.* In fact if there was any section of the people who were happy and enjoyed life during the Rule of the Pathans and other Muslim kings generally, it was the Muslim *bourgeoisie.* There was, therefore, every reason for them to feel sullen and spiteful during the Dogra rule. For now the scales had turned. The upper classes among the Hindus had got the upper hand and the predominating voice in the administration. The throne was accessible to them and they could do what they liked. They tried in every way to keep the Muslim *bourgeoisie* suppressed. But it must be said in fairness to the statesmanship of the Dogras that before serious attempts began to be made to establish a Dogra oligarchy in the State, the upper classes of all the communities were properly respected and encouraged, though by the very nature of things some received a lesser degree of this encouragement than others. Some of the more enthusiastic and radical, perhaps also patriotic and advanced, Muslim bourgeois felt disgusted with the conditions that existed in the country. They wanted some change but did not know how to bring it about. A few of them had tried their luck in 1924 by approaching the

then Viceroy. But the attempt was clumsy and they had to pay heavily for it.

The middle classes of the Muslims, among whom I include the educated young men, traders, craftsmen and contractors, were passing through more strenuous times. Not only had they to suffer all the disabilities and hardships which the Hindu middle classes had to face owing to the existence of an irresponsible and unsympathetic Government, but they had also to compete with the Hindu middle class itself which was undoubtedly placed in an advantageous position in certain respects. The subordinate services and the offices were dominated by the Hindus, both State-subjects and non-State-subjects, who would not tolerate parting with even a small portion of this monopoly. They would not allow the Muslims to get their legitimate share. The result was that the Muslims not only were deprived of their share in the services, but of all help and patronage in every department of the Government. Not unnaturally, Hindus would receive preference at every stage at the hands of their co-religionist officials, who were present everywhere in large numbers. For these reasons the Muslim middle classes also wanted a change.

To understand the Muslim politics of those days completely and grasp the full significance of the events which followed in quick succession, we shall have to discuss at some length the outside Muslim forces which influenced the local politics. For several years before 1931, an organisation known as All-India Kashmir Muslim Conference functioned

in British territories with its headquarters at Lahore. Its main function was to help the destitute and poor Muslim students of Kashmir with money to get themselves trained in various technical and educational institutions outside the State. It advanced a large number of loans to be returned when the recipient was well established in life and in a position to repay. It did appreciable work in this behalf. But it also dabbled in Kashmir politics. In 1926 the Conference approached His Highness for permission to submit a memorial, but this request was disallowed on the ground that " it was made by outside Mohammedans regarding the grievances of His Highness' own subjects."

The Punjab Muslims, particularly those with communal ideology and bent of mind, have always looked with viciously covetous eyes on Kashmir. Overwhelmingly predominated by the followers of Islam, Kashmir has been a country where they have disliked to see a Hindu Maharaja on the throne of the State. Some of them have inadvertently expressed themselves in no uncertain terms. But intelligent politicians have been more wary in this regard. They have made responsible public statements about it. But even these have not left critical minds doubtful about their ultimate intentions and objects. We have already mentioned the proposal of Dr. Iqbal to establish a pan-Islamic State in the North and North-Western Frontier of India which would include the provinces of Sind, Baluchistan, Punjab, N. W. Frontier Province and Kashmir. This was a responsible statement made in

the annual meeting of a big Muslim political organisation by an eminent poet, philosopher and politician. We need not mention some other proposals made by less eminent personalities. Suffice it to say that the outside Muslim politicians were anxious to see that Kashmir was handed over to Muslim rule again. The saner and the wiser sections, however, saw that the dethronement of the Hindu Maharaja was not an easy affair so long as British paramount power lived to support him. They, therefore, wanted to follow a wiser course and demanded constitutional Government for the people of the State. The democracy they wanted to see established was virtually a Muslim rule in Kashmir. Two parties worked with this end in view in the Punjab. They were the Ahrars and the Ahmadis. I feel that it is rather unfair to bracket them together. I must therefore say a few words about them before I proceed any further.

The All-India Majlis-i-Ahrar, mostly confined to the Punjab and a part of the U.P., is a radical section of the democrats and nationalists among Muslims and at times formed part of the Congress forces. For several reasons, which it is not necessary to discuss here, they did not join *en masse* the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930 in British India. Their energies were pent up and they felt restive. They had also lost face in their home province of the Punjab, and wanted to save it. Early in 1931 they heard about the stir in Kashmir, the movement that the educated Muslim young men had started. Here was an opportunity for them to

achieve their desired aim. By participating in the movement they would, they thought, kill two birds with one stone. They could fire the imagination of the Muslims all over India by actively helping with men and money the movement of the Muslims against a Hindu State and gain immense prestige in the Islamic world. They would also unloose the pent up energies of the party. Without any further ado, and like the reckless soldiers that they are, they threw in their lot with the movement and took a brilliant and marvellous part in it.

The Ahmadis (they are commonly, perhaps also hatefully, known as Mirzais) are a well-knit, compact and highly organised section among Muslims. They are avowedly communal and pro-British. For various differences born of different interpretation of the principles of Islam, this small community was most unpopular among the orthodox and progressive sections of the Muslims of the Punjab. Like other Muslims they had an eye on Kashmir and its millions. As soon as they saw the dust of the moving feet rising on the horizon of Kashmir they realised the importance of the occasion and began to act. They also wanted to kill two birds with one stone. They wanted to wash the stains of unpopularity in British India and win the millions of Kashmiri Muslims to their side and faith. But true to their political creed, and unlike the Ahrars, they had no desire to take any radical step. Though avowedly communal they were moderate in their demands.

Evidently Ahrars and Ahmadis could not and

did not join hands. Both worked mostly independently of each other. This produced an inevitable rift and a constant setback in the progress of the movement. We shall discuss that at its proper place. For the present we must only say that the outlook and the activities of both the parties produced a highly communal atmosphere inside the State. Even the Punjab politics was gravely affected by it subsequently, when the movement assumed enormous proportions.

Besides, there were Muslim politicians belonging to the All-India Muslim League and the All-India Muslim Conference (which was still functioning then) as also certain eminent statesmen owing no party affiliations who interested themselves in the affairs of the State. At the first beat of drum all of them became active and alert. Their communal and religious sentiments were roused and, though they did not take as prominent a part as did the Ahrars and Ahmadis, yet their contribution was by no means negligible.

Another factor which must be mentioned as contributing to the communal atmosphere of those days and to the amazingly quick success of the uprising was the attitude of the British Government towards the politics of the State. Strangely enough, forgetting its position as a government subordinate to them, and quite unmindful of the earlier part of Maharaja Partap Singh's reign, the State did not show that mild subordination to the Government of India and its omnipotent Foreign Department or to its representative on the spot, the Kashmir

Residency, which was expected. His Highness also displayed tendencies towards nationalism in British Indian politics while delivering speeches at the Round Table Conference. The Imperial Government became annoyed. They had a weapon handy, the one about which a Secretary of State had hinted in an ominous communication to the Government of India while dealing with Kashmir affairs in the beginning of Partap Singh's reign. That weapon was now to be admirably and efficiently used. They did not, therefore, easily protect the Maharaja against a rising of his Muslim subjects. There was also a reason for the British Government to encourage the Muslims in their designs. In the Civil Disobedience campaign of the Indian National Congress in 1930 communalist Muslims had kept themselves aloof. The policy of the British Government was to help the Muslim communalists as far as the Imperialist interests would allow. The Kashmir movement having taken a definite communal turn soon after it started in July 1931, nothing could please them more than that it should continue under their protection and patronage.

Having discussed the forces which shaped the Muslim politics during the days immediately before 1931, let me now say a few words about the attitude of the Hindus at the time. I have already mentioned Kashmiri Pandits and the reasons that made them feel disgruntled and dissatisfied with the policy of the Kashmir Government. The condition of the Hindu masses, the people who like their Muslim brethren, the Muslim masses, did not and could not

look at things from a narrow communal point of view, was most wretched. They were starving and famishing. Only a fringe of the upper class of the Dogra Hindus, mainly Rajputs, were satisfied with the state of affairs that prevailed. It was their own creation. They dominated the Government and influenced the Maharaja. Inefficient and utterly unimaginative, they wanted to tighten their hold more and more and create a complete Rajput oligarchy in the State. The establishment of a school for Hindu Rajput boys at Jammu roused the suspicions of all the communities. It was feared that young Rajputs were trained to hold all the responsible military and civil posts in the future oligarchy that was already in the making. The Government explained that "the school was founded and supported by *dan* (religious gift), money left by His late Highness Maharaja Partap Singh. But it was pointed out that the *dan* is given to Brahmins and not to Rajputs, and if Hindu Rajputs benefited, why should Mohammedan Rajputs, who took pride in calling themselves Rajputs, be deprived of the benefit of joining the school." Sardar Thakur Kartar Singhji, the main pillar of the Rajput oligarchy, who was one of the trustees of the school, stated that "it was the personal wish of Maharaja Partap Singh that this *dan* money should be used for the benefit of Hindu Rajputs." If there was any truth in the statement it is a proof positive of the sectional bias of the Dogra rulers who claimed to remain impartial in dealing with their subjects. To say that such things and worse are being done in the Nizam's

Dominions is to justify one wrong by another. The short-sighted communal Hindu is loud in repeating this *ad nauseum*, while the short-sighted communal Muslim applauds it in his heart, forgetting that wholesome maxim of civics and morality "Do unto others as you would that they did unto you."

This was the condition just before that uprising took place in Kashmir in 1931. Any man could see that old structures were shaking and breaking in the State. The earth was running under their feet; the times were moving fast and everything was going out of joint before their very eyes. Yet seeing the authorities saw not, nor did they understand. Such was their colossal incompetence!

## CHAPTER IV

### Those Memorable Weeks

Back again to the educated Muslim young men at Srinagar. They wanted to act. But how, that was the question. They could not speak : there was no freedom of speech. They could not write : there was no freedom of the press. They could not report and publish even the activities of the party and the deliberations they held about their local politics. They began to send their articles and news for publication to the outside press at Lahore. A large number of copies of the two, now defunct, Muslim papers, the daily *Siyasat* and the daily *Muslim Outlook* began to pour into the State. Educated Muslims in the towns, not necessarily connected with the Reading-room Party, would read them and consider it their sacred duty to carry the message far and wide into the country-side. The articles that appeared in these journals contained forceful condemnation of the authorities. Not infrequently scurrilous attacks were also made on the Hindu *Raj* and the Hindu community. This spread the agitation. The Govern-

ment became unnerved. They banned the entry of both the Muslim papers into the State territories. Muslim young men thereupon managed to obtain the services of another Muslim daily, the *Inqilab*, with the same result. Then a new process was started. Pamphlets began to be published at Lahore containing this inflammatory matter, and were despatched in bundles to different centres in the State, where they were distributed and sold to the Muslims and the general public. Thus one after another, appeared the *Kashmiri Musalman*, the *Kashmiri Mazlum*, the *Maktub-i-Kashmir* and others which were written in the language of fire. In these pamphlets appeals were made to the Muslims of Kashmir to rise against the Hindu administration of the State. In the name of the Holy Prophet and Islam the followers of the Faith were asked to sacrifice everything for the cause of the community and join the struggle which it was evident to everyone was coming with great speed. "Now or never" was the slogan.

About this time, or a little while before, news was received from Europe that His Highness was returning home. Her Highness the Maharani, who accompanied him, had given birth to the Heir-apparent Maharaj Kumar Karan Singhji on the 26th of Chet (March 1931) in the city of Cannes in France. So their return home was to be celebrated with great pomp and show as befitted the occasion. The officials of the State, the vested interests and the bourgeoisie made preparations on an extensive scale to demonstrate their loyalty to

the person of the Ruler. The *jagirdars* and a few prominent men wanted to excel all others. They decided to receive Their Highnesses at Bombay and present an address of welcome to them. They held a meeting in Srinagar to elect a Committee and its office-bearers for the purpose. Pandit Bal Kak Dar, a Hindu *jagirdar* and *Wazir Wazarat* (Deputy Commissioner), was elected the President of the Committee. Pandit Bal Kak forthwith sent a telegram of welcome and greetings to Their Highnesses on behalf of the Committee.

The Reading-room Party resented the election of a Hindu *jagirdar* as the President of the Committee. They taunted the Muslim *jagirdars* and jeered at them. This was done with the purpose of creating dissatisfaction among the Muslim *jagirdars.* And this it did create. A meeting of the Muslim *jagirdars* was held at the house of young Mir Maqbul Shah, where a decision was arrived at that the Muslim *raises* and *jagirdars* should present a welcome to Their Highnesses separately by themselves. About 200 people from all over the Kashmir Province attended the meeting. A Committee was formed who sent a telegram of greetings expressing sentiments of loyalty to His Highness.

Both the Committees applied for permission to present their respective addresses of welcome to His Highness who, however, was wise enough not to countenance communalism among his subjects in this manner and did not grant the permission.

In Kashmir, as elsewhere in India, Muslim masses, being most backward educationally and

economically, are slaves of superstition and deadliest social evils. In the name of religion the Mullahs have kept them in their strong grip and fleece them as much as they can. Among these Mullahs mention should be made of the two outstanding ones, the *Mir Waizes* of Srinagar as they are called. Owing to their popularity in the community and their strong hold on the masses, they have always exerted a considerable influence in the politics of the State. There is, however, no denying the fact that the Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid is a bigger personality than the Mir Waiz Hamdani of Khanqah-i-Mualla. It may be noted that, for reasons stated to be religious but in reality economic and political, they have never been on friendly terms with each other. In fact they are irreconcilables because they are rivals in profession, and their interests clash.

The Reading-room Party had the wisdom to see from the very beginning that if they were to succeed in their mission, they must be able to enlist the sympathies of both the Mir Waizes. Fortunately a suitable opportunity presented itself. Maulana Ahmad Ullah, Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid, died early in 1931. About a lakh of Muslims accompanied the mourning procession which followed the bier towards the graveyard. The procession was led by the Reading-room Party who were conspicuous by their activity in honouring the dead and arranging the procession.

Maulana Usuf Shah, an earnest young man with some education, was installed as the new Mir Waiz of Jama Masjid. He was in entire sympathy with the

Reading-room Party and promised all help. He was prepared to allow the young men to use the Jama Masjid as their political platform.

The Party manœuvred to obtain the consent of the other Mir Waiz also to join the movement. Perhaps he had the sagacity to foresee the coming events and feel the pulse of the community which was becoming more and more excited as time passed. The differences of the two religious leaders were evaporating into thin air. At any rate, it appeared so for the time being.

Preparations were now complete and a signal alone remained to be given. The Muslims lay in wait for an opportunity to do so. It came handy.

April 29, 1931, was I'd day. After offering prayers the *Maulvi* as usual delivered his *Khutba* to the congregation in the Jammu city. Owing to the excited times the Sub-Inspector of Police on duty, not knowing that the *Khutba* formed a part of the religious observance of I'd prayers, bade the Maulvi to stop. This was considered an interference with religion and meetings were held all over the country protesting against it.

A few days after this incident, another of the same nature took place in the Police Lines at Jammu. A Muslim police constable did not attend to his duty and remained asleep in his bed in the lines. His immediate superior officer, a Hindu head constable, reproached him for this negligence and winding up his bedding pushed it towards a corner. A Panjsura (part of holy Quran) fell down from the bedding. This was considered disrespect and defile-

ment of the holy Book. The report of the incident spread like lightning throughout the length and breadth of the country and the Muslim young men exploited it to their advantage. Yet another incident of a similar nature happened at Digore, a village in the Jammu Province, on the I'd day. The local police officer did not allow the Muslims to use a tank and the adjacent ground for offering prayers. Both these were in joint possession of the Hindus and Muslims and had been used by both for several years.

These incidents provided the slogan, "Islam in danger," which was raised in every part of the country by the Muslims. The atmosphere became highly tense and the Government lost no time in making inquiries. In order to appease the Muslims, the Hindu Sub-Inspector of police who forbade reading of *Khutba* was suspended; the police officer of Digore expressed regret for his inadvertent action. As regards the incident in the police lines Mr. G. E. C. Wakefield, a member of the Cabinet, proceeded from Srinagar to Jammu to hold an enquiry himself. Labh Ram, the Hindu head constable, was exonerated of the charge of any deliberate or intentional defilement of the holy Book. He was, however, prematurely retired from service for his rash deed and the Muslim constable, found guilty of the negligence of duty, was dismissed.

No enquiries and no drastic action could satisfy the Muslims or suit their purpose. They went on with their mischievous propaganda. A big printed poster was issued by the Young Men's Muslim

Association of Jammu describing these events in language which was highly provocative and inflammatory. These posters were sent to all the towns where the workers were to distribute them. The Reading-room Party arranged to paste them in Srinagar, through their own volunteers. Mohammad Ismail, one such volunteer, was arrested by the police near Fateh Kadal. This was a signal for the Muslims. In the twinkling of an eye thousands of them collected at the spot. The police officers including the D. I. G. and the I. G. arrived at the scene and pacified the mob.

A meeting was held that very day in the Jama Masjid to protest against the Jammu incidents. There was an unprecedented gathering in the meeting. Speeches were delivered and resolutions passed condemning the Hindu officials who had wounded the religious susceptibilities of the Muslims. At the end of the meeting the mass of people present formed themselves into a procession which passed through various streets shouting slogans.

The authorities were now perturbed. They realised the importance and the significance of the Jama Masjid gathering. They had tried, a little while ago, to persuade Usuf Shah not to join the young recalcitrants. Having failed in his endeavours in this direction, the District Magistrate of Kashmir convened a meeting of some well-known, influential and leading Muslims of Srinagar in his office. They were Mirza Ghulam Mustafa, Maulvi Rahim Shah Banday, Maulvi Sharif-ud-Din, Mir Maqbul Shah Gilani, Munshi Asad Ullah, Maulvi

Abdullah and others. The District Magistrate invited their suggestions to maintain peace and order in the province. There were both reactionaries and progressive men among the invitees. Mirza Ghulam Mustafa, Maulvi Rahim Shah, Maulvi Sharif-ud-Din and Munshi Asad Ullah, who did not look with favour upon the activities of the Reading-room Party, advised the District Magistrate to take drastic action and arrest the young men. Others did not approve of such a course. They submitted that the grievances of the Muslims ought to be redressed. It is important to note that the former have consistently remained reactionaries in Kashmir politics and formed the nucleus of the party which played the historic role of the counter-revolution soon after the first phase of the movement had passed.

The meeting did not prove helpful and the District Magistrate had to fall back upon his own resources to control the situation. The Government had been helping the Muslims since the days of Maharaja Partap Singh to realise a small tax from the Muslim peasantry for the construction of the Jama Masjid. The president of the construction commitee was the District Magistrate himself. In his capacity as the president he issued orders that no speeches of political nature were to be delivered inside the premises of the mosque until permission had been previously obtained. A notice to this effect was posted on the main gate of the mosque. But when the information reached the Reading-room Party, they decided to defy the orders.

The next Friday was a religious fair of the Muslims to be held at Durgah, a place four miles away from Srinagar. About fifty thousand Muslims attended this fair. Apprehending some trouble, the District Magistrate, accompanied by the reactionary Muslim leaders just mentioned, went to the place himself. A very cold reception awaited them there. It became quite obvious that these people had lost all influence over their co-religionists almost overnight. In glaring contrast to this, when three members of the young party arrived to participate in the fair, slogans unknown in the history of Kashmir were raised to give them an ovation.

No speeches were made at Durgah but people were asked to go to the Jama Masjid. The leaders proceeded in that direction and the whole mass followed them. In the afternoon that day a public meeting was held at the Jama Masjid in great excitement. For the first time the constituted authority in the State was deliberately flouted. The District Magistrate's orders were openly defied and the demands previously made were reiterated.

I have alluded to the visit of Mr. Wakefield to Jammu in connection with the enquiry into the Police Lines incident. In addition to the declared purpose of the visit he wanted to meet the leaders of the Jammu Muslims and have an idea of their intentions. During the course of an interview they told him that Muslims were suffering from many hardships in the State and had many grievances against the administration. If permanent calm was to be restored in the country these must be re-

dressed. Mr. Wakefield advised the Muslims to depute a few representatives to Srinagar where, along with some more representatives of the Kashmir Muslims, they would be afforded an opportunity to present themselves before His Highness to submit their demands. Accordingly four Muslim leaders, Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas, Mistri Yaqub Ali, Gauhar Rahman and Sheikh Abdul Hamid, proceeded to Srinagar.

In order to elect representatives of the Kashmir Muslims, the Reading-room Party formally convened a public meeting of the Muslims on 21st of June, 1931 in the open compound of the Khanqah-i-Mualla. This was one of the most important meetings in the history of the movement. In certain respects it was unique. Both of the irreconcilable Mir Waizes appeared on the same platform. Mir Waiz Usuf Shah entered the precincts of the Khanqah-i-Mualla which neither he nor perhaps his forefathers had done before. Even Maulvi Abdullah, "the Mirzai," was present. All sectional differences had been relegated to the background. *Sunnis*, *Shias*, *Hanfis*, *Wahabis* and *Ahamdis* had joined hands and the whole community was unanimous in its demands. Leaders swore by all that was holy in their eyes that they would remain faithful till the last. Brief speeches were delivered and the seven representatives were elected. Kh. Said-ud-Din Shawl, Mir Waiz Usuf Shah, Mir Waiz Hamdani, Aga Syed Hussain Shah Jalali, Khwaja Ghulam Ahmad Ashai, S. M. Abdullah and Munshi Shahab-ud-Din.

At the end of the function, when the meeting

had already been adjourned and the leaders had left the premises, an ugly-looking, short-statured Pathan, Abdul Qadir by name, obviously excited by the environments, delivered an inflammatory speech vehemently denouncing and abusing the Hindus and the Hindu Raj, before the gathering which was dispersing. This Pathan belonged to the North-West Frontier Province and had come to Srinagar with a European visitor as his cook. Abdul Qadir was arrested on 25th of June for this speech, which was considered seditious.

There were incessant rains in Kashmir during this time. These were followed by threatening floods. People became engaged in saving their lives and property for a couple of days. Everything was forgotten including the movement. As soon as the floods subsided, however, the Government duly prosecuted Abdul Qadir in the Sessions Court. During the course of the four hearings in the Court on the 6th, 7th, 8th and 9th of July it was found that the trial had greatly excited Mohammedan public opinion, and crowds of Mohammedans obstructed traffic on the way every time while the prisoner was brought to the court and taken back to the judicial lock-up. There was unrest again. The matters took a serious turn, and it was quite evident that a clash between the Muslims and the Government was imminent.

His Highness had lately returned from England after attending the first Round Table Conference in London. He was upset "to see a changed and regrettable attitude in certain sections in the cities of

Jammu and Srinagar." On July 9th, he delivered a "message" to his "beloved people" in which he greatly deplored this state of affairs and formally announced the policy and intention of his Government. He reiterated that "his religion was justice and all his public acts and policies were guided by it." He would allow "no discrimination against any class of people on the grounds of religion and subject to two fundamental conditions, *viz.*, (1) that political activities were confined within the law of the land, and (2) that no outside intervention was sought in any shape or form, he had no desire whatever to suppress the legitimate requests and voice of his people whether expressed in writing or in speech. His Highness further assured his people that "he was prepared to receive and consider most sympathetically any representation that any community might desire to submit to him." "Whenever I have found that any of you have been led into wrong action," ran this Royal Message, "I have always tried to make you see the errors of your ways and win you over to the right path by reasoning and conciliation. I am not a believer in false ideas of prestige for I hold that just action is a sign of strength and not of weakness." What fine sentiments from the head of an unbridled autocratic Government! But in the same breath in which these sentiments were uttered, the message administered a severe warning when it proceeded to say, "I cannot allow my Government to be coerced by threat into unjust action, and it is my duty to protect the law-abiding sections of my people from encroachments on their lawful

rights. The immediate burden of maintaining law and order necessarily falls on the magistracy and the police whose duty it will be to see that the law is upheld at all costs, and where the law is defied its authority is restored......I assure them that they will be supported by myself and my Government in the due discharge of their duties and will not be sacrificed to unjust clamour of intrigue."

This dual policy might have been successful in achieving its object had it been announced some months earlier, but now that every inch in the atmosphere was thick with excitement it produced no good results and the people dashed on. Numerous meetings were held throughout the State in which tens of thousands of Muslims participated. Hundreds of processions were taken out. The authority of law was openly defied and before long it became apparent that it was not easy to bring the situation under control as men, women and children took active part in these demonstrations.

Under these circumstances Abdul Qadir's open trial was considered inadvisable. It was confidentially ordered that he should be tried at the Central Jail and *in camera.* But the matter did not remain a secret and within a few minutes it was well-known that the trial would be held at the jail. Large crowds of Mohammedans collected before noon on the 13th July outside the jail gate, and when the time of trial came, the crowds had swelled to about seven thousand. The Sessions Judge has stated that it was related by the jailor that the crowd wanted to enter the jail building and to have a look att he face

of the accused. When the Sessions Judge and other officials arrived, the mob became uncontrollable and some of the Muslims forced their way into the outer compound of the jail. The District Magistrate, who had also come by this time, ordered the arrest of some of the ring-leaders of the mob. Out of all the officials present—and their number was large—not even one went forward to the crowd to reason with it and pacify it. The official Enquiry Commission which investigated into the affair subsequently have deplored this attitude of the officials and recorded their opinion that the crowd ought at least to have been told by the District Magistrate that it was a criminal gathering and ran the great risk of a clash with the authority. The arrests highly excited the crowd, who demanded the release of their leaders, and not obtaining it became infuriated and threw stones. Telephone lines were furiously shaken and subsequently cut. Attempts were made to set fire to the Police Lines and their contents were thrown out. At this stage firing was ordered. According to the official report ten men were killed and several wounded. It was found on the 26th of July that 21 persons died as a result of the jail incident.

After the firing the matters took a very grave turn. The officials became greatly nervous but could not leave the jail premises. A large part of the crowd carried the dead bodies on *charpoys* and went towards the city in the form of a procession. They carried a banner of blood in front and raised slogans. Public opinion among the Muslims had, by

this time, crystallised on the point that the Government and the Hindus were inseparable and the one stood for the other. Almost all the officials were Hindus—the Maharaja was a Hindu. So the responsibility for the actions of the Government must be shared by the Hindus. The jail firing which killed several Muslims created great resentment in the mob mind against the Hindus. So when the procession reached Maharaj Gunj, a busy trade centre of the city, Hindu shops which had been closed owing to panic after hearing of the jail incident were broken open and looted. A serious rioting followed not only at Maharaj Gunj but also at several parts of the city, notably Vicharnag and Nowshehra. Hundreds of Hindu houses and shops were denuded of their contents and the inmates badly handled. Three Hindus were murdered and 163 wounded. The rioters held the northern part of the city for three hours until the military came and occupied it. Firing was again resorted to that afternoon at Nawab Bazar, where one man was killed. Over 300 rioters were arrested, out of whom about 217 were subsequently released for want of sufficient evidence against them.

We need not go into the various details of these happenings. They have been dealt with comprehensively by an Official Commission comprising of three High Court Judges with the Chief Justice, Sir Barjor Dalal, Kt., I.C.S., as its President, which was set up for the purpose. In the opinion of the Commissioners "there was the height of topsy-turvydom at the time of disorder in the city and the executive

Head of the Police, the Inspector-General (a Dogra Rajput) was blessed neither with intelligence nor with imagination. He played a very sorry part on the 13th July. This Executive Head of the Police, principally responsible for order in the city, was nowhere in evidence prominently on that memorable day."

Historically and politically the 13th July is the most important day in the annals of Kashmir. Recently quite a lot has been written on its significance. The decision of the Kashmir National Conference to celebrate this day as a national festival has aroused a controversy in the press and on the platform. Communal Hindus have tried to minimise its importance while communal Muslims want to extol it only because the rioters got an opportunity to tyrannise over the Hindus.

I hope that from what has been said so far about the Kashmir politics it is quite evident that the Kashmir masses irrespective of their creed and caste were seething with discontent. While there is no denying the fact that the Muslim upper classes and communalists had an effective voice in the movement, it must be recognised that the driving force behind the mass agitation till the 13th July was the discontent among the rank and file of the Muslims. The attack on the jail was in no way directed against the Hindus, and those who laid down their lives at the jail gate did so fighting against an unsympathetic Government. Though conducted by the Muslims the struggle was national in essence. It was a fight of the tyrannised against their tyrants, of the oppressed

against the oppressors.

But the whole scene changed when the mob reached the city and the rioters looted the shops and injured the Hindus. While it is difficult to prove and highly doubtful to state that the Muslims responsible for the movement took any part in the loot which, in my opinion, must have been the work of *goondas* and those others who are always on a look out for such opportunities to fulfil their evil designs, it cannot be denied that the responsibility for these most unfortunate and sad events must be shared by the leaders of the Reading-room Party. Their inexperience, lack of foresight and inefficiency to cope with the situation which they had so carelessly developed must be admitted. But it should also be remembered that the indifferent and sometimes positively inimical and unnecessarily hostile and indiscriminate attitude of the Hindus towards both the nationalistic and communalistic aspirations of the Muslims, was by no means an insignificant factor in developing the movement on these dangerous lines.

There can be no doubt about loot taking place in Maharaj Gunj Bazar, in Vicharnag, and in other quarters of the city, of Hindu shops and houses by Mohammedans. Untold barbarities were committed by the rioters. Houses were broken, windows and doors were smashed and whoever resisted was beaten and wounded. Indescribable hardships were perpetrated on innocent passers-by. Even women and children were not spared ; they had their share of the molestation. For full two hours and more the

*goondas* ruled these parts of the city. Vandalism, incendiarism and brutalism became the order. This under the very nose of the Government!

Through hundreds of telephone wires the poor Hindu sufferers wanted to inform the Prime Minister, Mr. Wakefield, of what had happened, but he was not at home. The inefficient Rajput Inspector-General of Police was wandering about in search of him to receive instructions. When he heard about the riot and the loot, gallantry did not compel him to go to the scene of occurrence at once. He interested himself otherwise. "It is the height of topsy-turvydom," wrote the official Enquiry Committee, "when the Executive Head of the Police at the time of great disorder in the city should be only fit to have his services utilised in collecting lorries and despatching the military to the scene of terror and sorrow." Even when he ultimately reached Maharaj Gunj at 4-45 p.m. he was of little use either as help or in making observations as to what had happened. In answer to a question by a Commissioner, he admitted that he did not enter a single shop in Maharaj Gunj to find out "whether any loot had been committed there or not."

But how did the subordinates of the Inspector-General behave? The policemen of the Maharaj Gunj station and the outpost near the scene of occurrence shut themselves up by locking the doors of their building inside. The official Enquiry Committee came to the conclusion that "there is not one act of bravery to the credit of the police during the disturbance......Every witness, official and non-

official, has declared that policemen were conspicuous by their absence until the military arrived. A more scandalous exhibition of pusillanimity by the guardians of law and order can with difficulty be imagined." Severe strictures have been passed by the Committee on other high officials, such as the Governor of Kashmir, for remaining exceedingly negligent and making no preparations to meet the situation.

It was alleged by the Muslims that after the occupation of the disturbed parts by the military, the Hindus also looted Muslim houses, heavily beat the men and molested their women. The official Committee did not enter into any enquiry of the matter as they considered it outside their scope. While it cannot be denied that all such reports were exaggerated, I have reasons to believe that they were not entirely unfounded. The official Enquiry Committee lavishly praised the military and the attitude that it adopted. But in fairness it must be said that men posted at the disturbed quarters helped fanatics among the Hindus to take revenge for what had happened. It will be conceded, however, that the Hindus, especially the Pandits, had sufficient justification to lose balance.

The riot and loot in the city which began at about 2-30 p.m. on the 13th July proved a turning point in the Muslim movement. The Government got an opportunity to suppress it by dealing with it firmly. For the moment they could, with ample reasons to support their statement, tell the world that no legitimate grievance existed and the distur-

bances were caused owing to the mutual hatred of the two major communities living in the State. In fact the Riots Enquiry Committee started with this assumption and wrote its report on this basis. The Hindus became definitely hostile to the movement and openly and solidly joined the Government forces to get it suppressed. As to the Muslim movement itself, the communalists and pan-Islamists came to the helm. Not that there was any change in the leadership. That is not necessary in such movements. Only the indeology of the leaders became emphatically communal. The national essence of the movement was not understood. Consequently the communal and religious character of the struggle became more pronounced and its economic and political side lost its importance. The idea of Hindu rights and Muslim rights, characteristic of the bourgeoisie politics in India, began to assume greater significance, and small issues loomed large in the eyes of the people. This ideology of the movement had far-reaching consequences as we shall presently see in course of our survey. Slowly though steadily the Muslim masses began to lose interest in the movement and politics became the game of the upper and the unemployed educated middle classes.

But 13th July saw the beginning of gigantic force behind the mass movement. Soon after the jail incident, oddly enough, the three representatives of the Jammu Muslims, Mr. Abbas, Gauhar Rahman, and Mistri Yaqub, who had come to Srinagar a few weeks ago at the suggestion of Mr. Wakefield, were arrested. Mr. S. M. Abdullah was taken into custody during the

night at Jama Masjid where he, along with thousands of Muslims, was attending on the wounded and the dead who had been taken there in the afternoon. The next day two more leaders of the Muslims, Abdur Rahim (now employed as a Munsiff in the Judicial Department) and Ghulam Nabi Gilkar, were put under arrest. All of the six arrested persons were sent to the military cantonment, from where they were subsequently removed on the 15th of July to Hari Parbat fort, "the Bastille of Kashmir" when the condition in the city became threatening and grave.

## CHAPTER V

### The Mass Movement

The country from one end to the other was now one big mass of discontent and unrest. Law and order remained only in name, and the orders of the authorities were openly flouted at every place and at every stage. Complete *hartal* was observed by the Muslim shopkeepers throughout the Kashmir Province. The few Hindu shops also remained closed owing to the fear of loot. Hundreds of mass meetings were held to protest against the actions of the authorities, particularly the arrest of the leaders. Processions were taken out in all towns and big villages, in which men, women and children participated in large numbers. The bridge over the Jhelum at Sangam, a place 26 miles from Srinagar, was burnt down. The situation continued to be dangerous and difficult for many days. The Government resorted to the dual policy of threatening and cajoling the Muslims. A Royal Proclamation was issued on the 14th of July appointing a Committee of Enquiry to report upon (*a*) the circumstances which led to the

disturbances at the Jail, Maharaj Gunj and other localities in the city of Srinagar, (*b*) the sufficiency or otherwise of the action taken to anticipate and deal with the disturbances, (*c*) the restoration of communal peace and harmony, and (*d*) prevention of such deplorable occurrences in future. Two Muslim leaders, Kh. Said-ud-Din and Maulvi Abdullah, of rather moderate views were nominatad, one after the other, to work as non-official members of the Commission; but they refused as the Muslim public opinion did not favour their participation so long as other leaders were in jail. A purely official Committee consisting of three judges of the High Court with the Chief Justice, Sir Barjor Dalal, as its President, was, therefore, set up to make the enquiry. The Committee submitted their report on the 24th of September, 1931. I have already alluded to the findings of this Committee at several places in the last chapter. While discussing the circumstances leading to the disturbances and means and methods of establishing communal peace, the Committee made some suggestions for the consideration of His Highness. The Committee admitted that "the education of the Mohammedans is a matter over which Mohammedans are most sensitive." But they had nothing constructive to suggest beyond that the Education Minister must personally interest himself in this matter and have a consultative committee of Mohammedans to bring prominently to his notice all defects in the Department which the Mohammedans might consider injurious to their educational progress. Oddly enough, the Committee recognised the

existence of the growth of political and semi-political consciousness among the people and deprecated the delivery of provocative communal speeches in mosques; but they had nothing to say about the entire absence of freedom of press, platform and association in the State. Or, was it that such demands were nationalistic in essence and the Committee, who had presumed from the outset that the unrest was communal, did not like to countenance them? They laid great emphasis on the grant of adequate representation of Muslims in State services. The Committee did not consider the people fit for a Legislative Assembly but, afraid of the revolution in the country, clumsily recommended the establishment of two Boards comprised of equal Hindu and Muslim members under the Presidentship of Provincial Governors at Jammu and Srinagar, which would advise the Government regarding the administration. It was as if the Committee wanted to see more political unrest before the demand of a constitutional Government could be granted. And for this they had not long to wait.

In the meantime Mr. Wakefield, the Police Minister, was asked to resign by the end of July. It was found by the Dalal Committee that his behaviour during the days of disturbance was highly objectionable. For some time Mr. Wakefield had become extremely unpopular with the Hindus owing to his liberal and pro-Muslim leanings. They accused him of indirectly fanning the Muslim unrest. For more or less the same reasons Mr. P. K. Wattal, another member of the Cabinet, had to vacate his seat on a

subsequent date. On the 25th of July finding the situation unchanged and serious, His Highness requisitioned the services of Raja Hari Kishen Kaul, a Hindu *jagirdar* and capitalist with a stake in the country, as his Hazur Minister. Soon afterwards the Raja became the Prime Minister of the State.

Raja Hari Kishen tried to pacify the Muslims, but he could not prove successful so long as the prominent and popular leaders were in jail. He tried his hand at various methods, but finding no other effective way of restoring peace and order in the country, he decided to set at liberty the State prisoners in Hari Parbat fort. The leaders were released by the end of July on furnishing an undertaking that they would not deliver any speeches which might create communal bitterness.

The successful termination of the movement which resulted in the release of its leaders gave a great impetus to the activities of Muslims. The representatives of the two provinces became the confirmed and recognised leaders of the people. Mass meetings were arranged in their honour and people from all corners of the country flocked to hear their message.

At the time of the release of the internees a petition was submitted to the Government by those representatives who were outside jail that they might be allowed to submit a memorial to His Highness about the demands and grievances of the Muslim community. This was granted and accordingly August 6 was fixed as the day when a deputation would be received by His Highness. But on

that date the Muslims could not present themselves before His Highness and the date was postponed till the 10th. Ultimately the memorial was presented to His Highness on the 15th when the representatives of the Muslims were granted an interview. The memorial was a long one and put forward an allegation of the Muslims regarding the events of the 13th July and the circumstances leading up to them. It contained allegations that false evidence was being fabricated and that official influence was brought to suppress true evidence being given before the Dalal Committee. It also referred to the Press Communique which the Government had issued on the 28th July regarding the Srinagar riots as a premature verdict likely to influence the conclusions of the Committee. The representatives also demanded the dismissal of Raja Hari Kishen Kaul as Prime Minister. There were no other demands and grievances! Was it a political manœuvre to bide time, to dislodge a Hindu Prime Minister with a reputation for being a strong man, and thereby to weaken the Maharaja? Was it done at the suggestion of the Ahmadis and other Muslim communal leaders outside who rightly felt that the time was not yet ripe for the interference of the Political Department of the Government of India?

His Highness expressed his unwillingness to displace the Prime Minister in whom he said he had full confidence.

Soon after the 13th of July the communal-minded Muslims of the Punjab who took any interest in the politics of the Muslims of the State had

formed a body known as the " Kashmir Committee " to help the movement by propaganda and funds. The main pillars of this Committee were Dr. Sir Mohammad Iqbal and Mirza Bashir Ahmad, the Head of the Ahmadis at Qadian. The latter worked as the President of the Committee. The Committee desired to send a deputation to Kashmir to see for themselves what had happened. The Government refused the permission on the grounds that His Highness did not like any outside interference. A wise decision. The Kashmir Committee then decided to celebrate an All-India Day for the purpose of expressing sympathy with those injured on the 13th of July and of organising Muslim public opinion. It was named " Kashmir Day " ; and 14th August was set apart for the purpose. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other leaders took a great part in making the Kashmir Day a success in the State. This was another instance that the Muslim movement in Kashmir was working under outside influence.

We have seen that the Muslim representatives did not co-operate with the Dalal Committee in their enquiry and to a large extent refrained from giving evidence before it. Oddly enough, without suggesting any reasonable alternative, they chose to regard the appointment of the Committee as an additional grievance.

In these circumstances public unrest among the Muslims continued to increase steadily during the month of August.

Some important nationalist leaders of all-India

fame visited Kashmir during these days—notably Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru. The Maulana advised the Muslims to be non-communal in outlook in their political affairs, and Sir Tej Bahadur advised the Government to be large-hearted and liberal in considering the grievances of the public. This produced a sobering effect on both sides so that through the intervention of Sir Mehr Shah, a moderate Muslim politician of some standing in British India, an understanding was arrived at between the Government and the ten representatives of the Muslims on the 26th of August. It is known as Temporary Truce. According to this understanding the Muslims undertook completely to stop the agitation. No speeches would be delivered nor any action taken in mosques and other religious places or in public meetings which was likely to create feelings of hatred against the Government or any class of His Highness' subjects. The Muslims declared that no outside influence affected their affairs and undertook to appeal to their sympathisers that, pending decision as regards their demands, no such action might be taken by them as would injuriously affect the calm atmosphere needed for a favourable consideration thereof. The representatives expressed their sentiments of loyalty and devotion to their Ruler, His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur, and expressed their gratitude to the Prime Minister who had, they said, displayed great magnanimity in dealing with their requests.

The Government on their behalf undertook to suspend all such measures as they had adopted under

the law in force for the time being for the suppression of this agitation. Persons accused were released on bail and the cases of those officials who were dismissed, suspended or degraded in connection with the agitation were to be reconsidered. If they furnished assurances that they would take no part in agitation they would be reinstated.

The terms of this truce were revealed to the public on the 28th of August in the Jama Masjid and not unnaturally the Muslims were greatly disappointed to hear them as they did not deal with the underlying grievances but only with matters arising out of the agitation and its causes. The Muslim public began to realise that the leaders were selfish and cared more for their own prestige and power than the interests of the poor people. The representatives began to be much upset, not knowing how to deal with the situation

The Pandits of Kashmir now felt aggrieved over the temporary truce. They did not like that the Government should have parleyed with the Muslim leaders who were mainly responsible for the riot and the loot in which they had terribly suffered. The three representatives of the community, among whom I was one, sent a letter to the Government laying down their main grievances. Unfortunately the Prime Minister was ill-advised to send an indiscreet reply in which he challenged the claim of the leaders to represent the community. He called it a "tall presumption" and could not bring himself round to agree with it with the "largest stretch of imagination." An agitation was therefore started

by the Pandits which culminated in the arrest of Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, one of their representatives. The Government was, however, soon successful in pacifying the Pandits. The Prime Minister withdrew his reply and agreed to grant certain very minor demands and the agitation came to an end. It, however, created more bitterness in the communal atmosphere and more suspicions in the minds of the Muslims who imagined that the Hindu movement was a manœuvre to hoodwink them.

In the meantime fresh trouble arose. The Government was rather slack in implementing the terms of the temporary truce and made undue delay in taking action in accordance with them. Muslim leaders became impatient and expressed their disappointment in public meetings at this attitude of the Government. But, one might ask: what was there in the terms of the truce which benefited the masses so much that they responded to the call of their leaders so readily? The truth is that the masses had once risen in revolt owing to grinding poverty and hunger. They wanted to end the regime that was the cause of this economic backwardness. Instinct pushed them forward and from whatever side and on whatever basis they were called upon to fight the Government they were immediately available. They were in a state of ferment throughout those long months until they found out that they were being exploited by the upper classes to frighten the Government in order to gain their own ends.

It was bad, inefficient and inexperienced leadership; it could not derive the best advantage of the

situation and utilise this gigantic force for better and higher purpose. It was a tragedy that the Muslim leaders who were accidentally playing the historic role of leading the masses could not realise the importance of their charge and toyed with it. It is a pity that such an enormous force which could have changed the very complexion of the Government of Kashmir was allowed to fritter away. Muslim communalists bartered the widespread mass consciousness for a few crumbs thrown from the dining table of the Government towards middle and upper class Muslims.

On the 21st of September, Mr. S. M. Abdullah and M. Jalal-ud-Din (now, Lecturer of Arabic, S. P. College) were arrested by the Deputy Inspector-General of Police at 11 a.m. while they were making collections in the city for the annual *jalsa* of the Islamia High School. At this very moment some of the representatives of the Muslims were discussing the alleged breaches of the temporary truce with the Governor of Kashmir in his office. The news of the arrests spread like wild fire throughout the city. Complete *hartal* was observed and in the afternoon many processions were taken out by way of protest.

On the next day it became evident that the situation was grave again and resentment deep. Thousands of people had collected at the Jama Masjid. The authorities mishandled the situation and would not allow them to take out a procession. When the people tried to do so in defiance of law they were fired upon, with the result that three men were killed and several wounded. At the same time

a " not well-controlled fire " was opened on another crowd in the city at Maisuma, where two men were killed and three wounded, including a woman.*

On the 23rd of September about fifty thousand people assembled at the Jama Masjid for the purpose of giving a decent burial to the men who had been killed on the previous day. But the officers on spot would not allow the people to come out of the mosque and accompany the funeral procession to the graveyard, which was at a distance of about four hundred yards. Permission was repeatedly refused, but late in the afternoon Nawab Khusro Jung, Minister-in-Waiting to His Highness, came with an order from the Prime Minister that the procession should be allowed. The procession thereupon allowed to proceed to the graveyard was orderly in going to and returning from the burial ground. Upon their return to the Jama Masjid the people dispersed quietly and went to their homes.

That very night arrest warrants were issued against Kh. Said-ud-Din Shawl, Kh. G. A. Ashai (now, an Inspector of Schools) and B. Ghulam Mohammad. The police party could not find entrance into the house of Mr. Shawl till day-break when, on hearing all kinds of rumours, about ten thousand Muslims armed with various sorts of weapons gathered at the spot. In these circumstances the arrest of Mr. Shawl could not be effected.

The 24th of September, 1931, is another important day in the history of Kashmir. On this day in

---

*Middleton Report.

spite of their leaders the masses made their overwhelming majority felt. They also, in spite of their leaders again, proved that the struggle was political and non-communal and directed entirely against the administration of the State. Large crowds of Muslims with all kinds of crude weapons in their hands were parading the streets and brandishing their arms. There is evidence to believe that thousands of people came from the countryside to participate in these demonstrations. According to the official report it was impossible for any policeman to go out into the streets. Throughout the city the police remained inside their quarters and police control was for the time being entirely suspended. It is highly significant that not a single Hindu—man, woman or child—was molested by the mob on this day. On the other hand, there is reliable evidence to show that certain members of the mob furnished instances of great chivalry and real heroism in escorting some Hindu women. Men voluntarily accompanied them to their homes. Even though misguided by the upper classes, the Muslim masses had not lost sight of their goal. They were giving a demonstration of their strength and pointing to their real ambitions and aspirations. I do not believe that this demonstration had been planned by the representatives. It was spontaneous. It was a protest both against the unwanted Government of the day and against the bourgeoisie leadership. While the Hindu upper classes thought that this gigantic and terrible demonstration was the creation of the Muslim upper classes, the latter were

themselves frightfully taken aback on finding the magnitude of the demonstration. Muslim leaders hurriedly held a meeting at Mr. Shawl's residence and five or six of them applied for an interview with His Highness which was granted. They explained their position before their august sovereign. So long as the Muslim masses were under the control of the bourgeoisie leadership and faithfully carried out their behests, the leaders used them to bring pressure upon the monarchy; but when they acted spontaneously and in their own interests, the leadership sought refuge in royalty. This was another effect of the class mentality, and proof enough that the leadership was afraid of leading the masses.

But the Government was deeply annoyed by now. To them the spontaneous and gigantic action of the masses was intolerable. The brandishing of knives and spears in the public streets, although happily without any untoward accidents, furnished a good justification for taking drastic steps. So on the 24th of September an Ordinance was drawn up. It is called Ordinance No. 19-L of 1988. It was drawn on the lines of an ordinance which had been promulgated in Burma to put down an organised and armed rebellion in that country, and was immediately put into operation. The city was handed over to the Military Control and the Civil Administration was suspended.

We shall have to discuss Ordinance 19-L in some detail in a subsequent chapter of this book. For the present let it suffice to say that it is a mea-

sure granting special and exceptional powers of arrest and detention to ordinary officials such as sub-inspectors of police. In all cases offences against its provisions or against the rules made under it are tried summarily and punished with imprisonment or with flogging or both.

A route march of the available troops through the city was held in the forenoon on the 25th September when people in the streets were made to stand up and salute the State flag. If inadvertently or knowingly someone did not do so, he was brutally assaulted by the military men who left the ranks for the purpose. Even women were not spared. In the evening ten *ailans* (announcements) were issued under the signature of Brigadier Sutherland ordering that (1) all shops should be opened before 9 a.m. on the 26th of September ; (2) all arms should be deposited ; (3) gathering of five or more persons on public place was punishable ; (4) all slogans excepting those of a loyal nature were prohibited ; (5) presence on a thoroughfare between 10 p.m. and 5 a.m. was prohibited except in the case of Europeans ; (6) permission was to be obtained for entry into or exit from Srinagar except, again, in the case of Europeans.

An *ailan* was drawn up to the effect that the public should salute military officers passing in the streets, but it was considered unnecessary. The Ordinance remained operative for 11 days.

The troops misbehaved themselves. As already stated, Kashmiris are not recruited in the State forces. The troops were therefore not only non-

Kashmiris but, most of them, Dogra Rajputs. They gave full play to their racial animosity and religious perversity when dealing with the Muslims. Although the *ailan* enjoining people to stand up and salute all military officers, high and low, passing through the streets, was not issued, yet the military men carried it into effect and people were harassed everywhere on this account. " As the suggestion to draw up the *ailan* had come from the State Military officers, it is not unreasonable to suppose that they had already enforced the practice and were unwilling to discontinue it," wrote Mr. L. Middleton*. Men were dragged from their shops and even houses on mere pretences and severely beaten; the contents of their shops were looted. Some Europeans have recorded their evidence that this was being done entirely unprovoked. Brigadier Sutherland had to arrest several military men when this wanton aggression went to extremes.

The police did not behave any better. They were busy in squeezing bribes out of the people. This is what Mr. Middleton said :

" The summary trials which were conducted were necessarily based mainly on information supplied by the police or the troops. It was unlikely that non-official Mohammedans would come forward to give evidence against each other and I feel quite certain that non-official Hindus would fear to do so during the continuance of the excitement and ill-feelings which followed the disturbances. In these circumstances there was rich field for dishonest minor officials to exploit and it would be

---

*Mr. Middleton was subsequently appointed to make inquiries into the disturbances. Most of the facts and descriptions given in this chapter have been taken from his reports.

**surprising if no bribery had occurred. The cases mentioned in evidence are allegations not proved but I have no doubt that they are based on fact."**

It was easy for the police to report anyone as a turbulent man, get him summarily tried and convicted. Public flogging was the punishment awarded. People were mortally afraid of this barbarous method of dealing out justice. They paid handsome amounts to escape this torture and insult.

For insult it was. The flogging centre was the Exhibition ground which is on the roadside near Amira Kadal in the city. The civilised Government officials would not care to cover the place while flogging a poor wretch who was exposed to the full gaze of passers-by—stripped naked of all his clothes. One hundred respectable and grown-up men were sentenced to flogging and in several cases it was severe, as no less than thirty stripes were administered on their bodies.

This inhuman barbarity could not be tolerated and protests were made against it throughout India in the Nationalist Press. The *Tribune* of Lahore vehemently condemned the authorities for the flogging and disapproved of the Ordinance Raj in general.

The details of the news of Srinagar events reached all places in the State. There was restlessness everywhere.

Complete *hartal* was observed, processions were taken out and meetings held in all big towns to protest against the repressive policy pursued by the Government. The arrest of the political leaders

and the firings on Muslim crowds came in for condemnation in these meetings everywhere. At Anantnag the matters took a serious turn. The procession which started from *Idgah* on 23rd of September was allowed to pass through the town, as the local officials who wanted to avoid responsibility could not promptly decide what action to take. But when the procession reached near Malak Nag, a narrow and confined place, after dusk, it was not allowed to proceed further. There was a clash and the troops had to open fire with very tragic results. According to official report twenty-one people were killed and twenty-seven injured. Some of those killed and injured were of less than ten years of age.

At Shopian the matters became even worse. A Muslim fakir was arrested there on 23rd of September for shouting seditious slogans. This was a signal for a fight. On the 24th the fakir was tried at the Munsiff's court. The proceedings added fuel to the smouldering fire of unrest in the town. The next day being Friday, Muslims gathered in large numbers at the Jama Masjid to protest against the actions of the authorities at Srinagar and elsewhere. At the end of the meeting a procession was taken out. It was met by the Munsiff and a body of troops but refused to disperse at his bidding. Fire was opened and several people wounded. Then the crowd dispersed. The Munsiff ordered a firing again when at another place he confronted a mob who appeared hostile. Some of the Muslims became violent, caught hold of a Hindu police official and beat him to death. The police station was also pelted and

attacked. The police fired from the windows of their *thana* building and many persons were injured.

All those wounded in consequence of these firings were left to their fate and no attempts were made to provide medical aid for them. Writing about this Mr. Middleton said: "The most serious comments that I have to make in connection with the conduct of affairs in Shopian after the riot are in connection with the inefficiency of the medical treatment given to the wounded at the local dispensary."

But now there was cause enough for the Government to take revenge. Troops had already reached the town from Srinagar, but their presence was not considered a sufficient guarantee to maintain law and order. So the handy Ordinance L.-19 was promulgated and *ailans* were issued in the town on the 26th.

During the period of the Military Control, the tale of excesses which I have described while writing about the Srinagar disturbances was repeated. The police had ample reason to torture the Muslims as one of their members had been murdered. Military men helped them to take their revenge on the poor, defenceless and unarmed people. From all accounts, official and non-official, it can easily be gathered that there was no law in the town. A large number of people left the place or went into hiding. Those who remained behind had to attend the identification parades as the police was busy in investigating the cases of the riot and the murder of the police

official. While the villagers were thus engaged with the police, the chivalrous Rajput soldiers would go about the town, enter their houses, loot them and abuse their women folk. Several cases of rape were reported to Mr. Middleton who himself admits grave suspicion about one having actually taken place. Shopkeepers were first ordered to open their shops and were then arrested and taken to the *thana* for investigation. In their absence the shops were looted. Every torture against Muslims was perpetrated. People were beaten on the slightest pretext and made to stand up and salute every soldier or police official who passed through the streets and the lanes of the town. "I have nothing but condemnation to record regarding the facts that the people were forced to stand up and shout on occasions when the police and troops passed by, and in many cases they were beaten if they delayed in doing so," observed Mr. Middleton. Mark, the word is "delayed" and not "refused". The beatings, he adds, were not of a trivial nature. It is no wonder that the Muslims were terror-stricken. When four soldiers came to arrest a Mohammedan he jumped from the window. The soldiers questioned his wife. She became dumbfounded and her nerves broke down. After the departure of the soldiers her husband found her lying dead. Such is the horrifying tale of the Ordinance Raj at Shopian.

During these dark days when the Kashmir Government became very short-sighted, the authorities made it their special concern to see that those persons who had anything to do with the political

movement were severely punished and extremely humiliated. The idea was to crush their spirits. The houses of such persons were specially searched. They were recommended for flogging. Even Brigadier Sutherland, who has been generously praised by Mr. Middleton for his impartiality, sent Maulvi Abdullah to Shopian to work as an official under the Ordinance 19-L. The intention was to degrade him in the eyes of the Muslims. Maulvi Abdullah is an old man of about sixty years. He is one of the pioneers who worked for the uplift of the Muslims in Kashmir. He has been a pleader of the High Court for more than two decades. No sooner did he reach Shopian than he was arrested and charged with having urged Hindus not to give evidence against Mussalman offenders and with having spread false rumours. He was summarily tried, convicted and sentenced to six months' imprisonment The whole affair was conducted in such a clumsy manner that Mr. Middleton was forced to observe in his report that in his opinion "the Munsiff made ill-advised use of his summary powers in this instance." If all such trials were scrutinised by an impartial judicial authority it would be found that in many such cases with little exception partiotic men were punished for no fault or crime but for the love of their motherland. Judicial proceedings served only as a veil to cover the malicious intentions of the officials.

As I write these lines, admiration rushes forth from the bottom of my heart, and my head bows in reverence to the unbounded spirit of

sacrifice which a large number of men and women—illiterate, unsophisticated and defenceless—manifested in humbly, patiently and meekly undergoing the brutal torture which was inflicted upon them. The present structure of the national movement truly rests on the solid and secure foundation of those sacrifices. These atrocities though extreme in their severity did not produce the desired effect. The military control did not restore peace and order. On the other hand, as already observed, the nationalist circles and liberal-minded politicians outside the State who had not approved of the communal tendencies in the Kashmir movement, now felt called upon to cry halt to these barbarous methods of dealing with the situation. No alternative was left for the Government but to adopt conciliatory measures to appease public opinion.

The 5th of October, 1931, was His Highness' birthday. A *Durbar* was held at Srinagar in the afternoon at which a royal proclamation was read, in the course of which His Highness again deplored the attitude of some of his subjects. His Highness believed that all this agitation was artificial and that the poorer classes who lost lives and suffered most owing to loss of work and unemployment resulting therefrom had to gain nothing by it. He wanted to conciliate the Muslims and therefore said :—

"It will be within the experience of many persons assembled here that parents have at times to use force in bringing refractory children to order. But a parent has not

the heart to continue to punish a child after it has ceased to be disobedient. What applies to parents in their dealings with children applies to Rulers of Indian States in dealing with their people. I am satisfied that the purpose which my Government had in view in using force has now been served. The law has been vindicated and the impression that it could be defied with impunity no longer exists. I feel therefore that the time has come for the step in the direction of the restoration of absolutely normal conditions. Relying on the loyalty and devotion of my Muslim subjects to my Throne and Person and reposing the utmost confidence in their good sense and respect for law and authority, I hereby order as follows :—

1. That Notification No. 19-L. of 1988 recently enacted be withdrawn, as no present necessity exists for it.

2. That other emergency measures be abrogated at the earliest possible moment.

3. That troops be withdrawn immediately from the Srinagar civil area to which they have been posted to cope with the situation and from other areas as soon as possible.

4. That all persons interned or under trial for offences against the State or convicted under Notification No. 19 L. be released.

5. That all pending prosecutions for offences against the State as distinguished from offences against persons and private property be withdrawn and Police inquiries into similar cases be dropped. "

It is interesting to note what was said in this Royal Proclamation about the work of the Military and Police in their dealings with the people :—

" I believe I am voicing the general feeling when I say that we are deeply grateful to the Troops for their devotion to duty and the self-restraint they have shown in maintaining the public peace and authority of law during the last three months. Their task was necessarily unpleasant and thankless, they were subjected to great personal discomfort, grave

provocation and danger to their own lives. But they stood the ordeal and trials admirably.

"The Magistracy and the Police have also worked extraordinarily hard."

Self-restraint and devotion to duty indeed!

This Martial Law under the provisions of 19-L remained in force in Srinagar and Shopian for a period of less than two weeks. But it was enough to show to what lengths Government could go to suppress the people of Kashmir and break their spirit. That they did not succeed in their aim was in no way due to their leniency or half-heartedness in dealing with the situation and crushing the peoples' front.

On 19th October a Committee was appointed under the Chairmanship of the Chief Justice to enquire into the causes of disturbances which occurred during the month of September. Maulvi Usuf Shah Mir Waiz was nominated as one of the two non-official members of this Committee. Muslims again, for reasons unknown, boycotted it. This Committee was dissolved on 10th November, and on the 13th the enquiry was entrusted to Mr. L. Middleton whose services were obtained from the Government of India for the purpose.

I have exhaustively surveyed the events in the Kashmir Province. It could not be that the people of the Jammu Province would silently watch all this as indifferent spectators. We must therefore take leave of the valley and turn our attention to the other side of the Pir Panchal and see what was happening there.

As a result of the events in the Kashmir Province unrest in Jammu was simmering for a considerable time. The Ahrar Party in the Punjab organised several demonstrations to show that their sympathies were with their co-religionists inside the State territories. They also sent large parties of Muslims called *jathas* into the State territories to bring pressure on the State Government to remove the disabilities of Muslims and grant their demands. During the month of September over 2500 members of these *jathas* were arrested within the State boundaries in the course of a few days. Owing to the royal proclamation on the 5th of October these activities of the Ahrars were temporarily suspended, but on the 29th of October a fresh inrush of Ahrar *jathas* started and over 2000 Muslims were arrested in the vicinity of Suchetgarh, the frontier post between Sialkot and Jammu, by the 2nd of November.

On the 31st of October a procession organised by the Young Men's Muslim Association paraded the streets of Jammu. A copy of the report of the Dalal Committee was carried on a bier and was ultimately burnt at a place known as "Ghazi Camp," a private place of the Muslims. On the 1st of November the Muslims decided to resort to civil disobedience and openly defy the laws of the Kashmir Government. About 30 volunteers headed by a dictator carried copies of proscribed newspapers in a procession and sold them. The procession went through most of the main bazars of the city. The white-robed demonstrators were

shouting slogans and their dictator was delivering brief speeches at intervals, in which he said that the power of the Dogra Government had been broken and that its funeral had been celebrated. The authorities were undecided and did not know what to do.

These processions led to great excitement and the 2nd November found the city in a very disturbed state. Unfortunately news was received at about noon that an Ahrar *jatha* which had entered the State boundaries had been involved in a fracas with the Rajput villagers of Top, a village some five miles from Jammu. This worsened the situation. There was a minor Hindu-Muslim clash and the civil authorities finding themselves unfit to deal with the situation, requisitioned the troops which however appeared at 8-30 p.m. when the outbreak had actually ceased. That evening and night the Rajput soldiers, it is said, allowed the Mohammedan shops in various quarters to be plundered during the absence of their owners. Some soldiers assaulted innocent people. The city remained under Military control on the 3rd, on which day an incident occurred at the Ghazi Camp which involved firing by the troops. As a result of the riot and the firing two men were killed and 50 wounded, both Hindus and Muslims.

The behaviour of the soldiers appeared so reprehensible that people openly and loudly expressed their utter lack of confidence in them. It was at this stage that His Highness and his Government realised that without the effective help of the British Government it was difficult for them to

control the gigantic movement which had spread far and wide in the country. They had resisted the temptation of writing to the Government of India on this subject so far, but such a desire became irresistible. The authorities at New Delhi had patiently waited for this moment and, of course, they were only too willing to intervene and help His Highness at that hour of his weakness. The policy of the British Government which was clear enough from the attitude of the Anglo-Indian Press during the whole course of the movement at once changed.

From the beginning of November 1931, Kashmir politics enters another phase of its development owing to this direct supervision of British Imperialism. On 4th November the British troops were despatched to Jammu. The Rifle Brigade arrived from Jullundur, and on 5th took over entire military control of the city, and the State troops were withdrawn. A few days later His Excellency the Viceroy of India promulgated an ordinance to stop the inrush of the Ahrar *jathas* into the State territories by banning this trouble at its source. "Had it been possible to take that action a few days earlier," wrote Mr. Middleton, who enquired into the causes of disturbances in Jammu after completing his work in the Kashmir Province, "subsequent events at Jammu might have taken a very different turn."

By the end of November trouble arose in the district of Mirpur in the Jammu Province. A manifesto was issued by Sardar Gauhar Rahman, a Jammu leader, in a most irresponsible manner asking the

ryots to desist from paying land revenue to the Government. This naturally created a spirit of defiance among the most backward and illiterate peasantry. No preparations had been made previously by the Muslim leaders to organise and train the civil resisters. The issue of the manifesto therefore produced very disastrous results.

*Sahukars* (money-lenders) in the Mirpur district are rich people. For a long time in the past they have been bleeding the poor peasants by extorting their hard-earned pennies in the shape of interest on imaginary or genuine debts. Even after having paid 300 per cent interest the loan still remains intact and is never written off. A large number of peasants are born in debt, remain in debt all their lives, and die in debt.

The preaching of civil disobedience and defiance of authority produced a hatred for the Hindu Government. Almost all the *sahukars* were Hindus. Therefore all Hindus were considered to be enemies by the peasantry which is, in that district, mainly Muslim. The destruction of the *kafir* (infidel) by murder, loot, and incendiarism became the order of the day. No distinction was made between the rich and the poor, between the money-lender and the labourer; all Hindus fell victims to their fanaticism. Whole villages were burnt down and entire buildings razed to the ground in the greater part of the Tehsils of Mirpur, Kotli and Rajouri. Economic and religious factors played equal parts in this disturbance, and for the time being it was difficult to separate them.

The unrest soon spread to the adjoining area of the Poonch *jagir*. There was an enormous uprising against the Hindu Raja of the *jagir*. He had to shut himself up in the local fort for several days and leave the city in the hands of the mob.

There were no good roads in the district of Mirpur and the neighbouring areas. Communication was entirely cut off with the headquarters at Jammu and the Government became helpless for some weeks to deal with the situation. The condition of the wretched victims of vandalism could only be seen from the air. The British troops were requisitioned and the whole area was handed over to Military control, not before much damage had been done. The situation came under control by the end of January 1932 and it was found that a large area of the district had been reduced to ashes and devastated. It was a long time afterwards that reconstruction plans were drawn up and carried out to restore normal conditions in unfortunate Mirpur.

Disturbances reappeared in the Kashmir Province in the beginning of 1932. Having delivered a speech in the Khanqah Mualla protesting against the deportation of a colleague from Kashmir, Mr. S. M. Abdullah was arrested on the 19th of January under the provisions of Notification No. 19-L which had been promulgated a couple of days earlier. There was unrest again all over the province. *Hartals* were observed and processions taken out in the big towns as usual. Hundreds of people were arrested and sent to prison. At Baramulla, Sopore and Uri troops had to open fire and several people were killed and many

injured. Thanks to severe cold winter months calm was soon restored.

This brings us to the close of the first period of the Kashmir movement which was characterised by spontaneous action on the part of the masses. The upper classes and the vested interests among the Muslims were anxious to use the movement to gain their own ends, which sidetracked it and arrested its growth on healthier lines. They introduced communalism into it and made the movement of the masses look like a Muslim uprising against a Hindu State. Many of those who had been thrown up by the movement as its leaders were happily nearer the masses than to the upper classes. But they were inexperienced and hardly able to guess the true significance of their gigantic historic mission. Had the leadership been seasoned, far-sighted, liberal, and wise, the movement would undoubtedly have taken a different turn. By the middle of 1932 the Kashmir movement definitely came under the complete control of the upper classes of the Muslims, and the masses gradually withdrew from it. I shall discuss its evolution presently.

Before I close this chapter I must say a word about those who were at the helm of affairs during this critical period of history of the State. I have already mentioned the cliques that had been formed in the officialdom, and the puerile behaviour of the Rajputs who wanted to form a Dogra oligarchy. With this dangerous outlook of those at the top it was but natural that the subordinate service should suffer and become most inefficient. Replying to the

question as to how far the authorities responsible for the preservation of law and order had acted with intelligence and foresight, the Dalal Committee wrote : " Both were absent and the officers exhibited lack of intelligence, efficiency, foresight and executive capacity. Everybody wanted to concentrate the powers in himself and mutual trust was entirely absent. The Inspector-General of Police did not behave as the Executive Head of the Police but merely as an underling of the Police Minister."

The Government, manned as it was by inefficient men, could not cope with the situation and the whole administrative machinery went out of joint during the days of the disturbances all over the State.

Mr. Middleton arrived at the following conclusion :—

" A very noticeable reason for complete breakdown of the administration in Jammu City at this time of crisis is the anxiety of all officials, high and low, to avoid responsibility ; whenever faced with a position demanding decisive action such officials went off to get orders from higher authorities ; this failing was so universal as to suggest that officials had not been trained to accept responsibility in the ordinary course of their duties and that their initiative had been suppressed by distrust on the part of their Superior Officers."

How could public servants prove efficient when they were selected not for their merit and love of public duty but because they belonged to a certain fortunate class of people ?

# CHAPTER VI

## Grievances and Demands

In his Royal Proclamation granting general amnesty to all political prisoners and abrogating emergency measures, His Highness repeated on 5th October, 1931, his assurance that "if any section of my subjects desires to submit any reasonable requests they will receive my sympathetic consideration." This part of the proclamation was well received by the progressive sections of the people. Memorials were drafted immediately by the representatives of the Muslims, Hindus of all shades of opinion, Sikhs, Rajputs and Kashmiri Pandits, in which various grievances, particular to individual communities as also those they had as citizens of the State, were laid down.

We need not go into the memorials of non-Muslims as, owing to the reactions produced by the aggressive communal mentality of the Muslims and the terrible consequences of the riots the memory of which was quite fresh then, they had subordinated the national rights to the demand of protection of

life and property by a good and strong Government. In fact the Sikhs frankly declared that " they were not particular about the inauguration of the Legislative Council." They wanted " thirty-three per cent in services, a Minister in the Cabinet and one-third of the posts from highest to the lowest in the Army."

The Kashmiri Pandits admitted that recently they had not been so vocal on political reform, but the reason was that the Musalmans had presented their claims on communal grounds and for communal ends. " The Kashmiri Pandits are as anxious as any other community for the introduction of constitutional Government, but they are equally anxious that the body politic should not be corrupted by the canker of communalism." They wanted " fair field and no favour in the matter of grant of services ; the doors of military services should be thrown open to them and employment should be provided for their educated unemployed, as it is the duty of the State to provide a living wage for every adult male willing to work."

The memorial of the Rajputs believed in brevity and was more a sermon on resolute Government than a request. It complained of His Highness' acts of omission and commission as Rajputs viewed them, and expected that he would " take steps to prevent the recurrence of the contingency."

The Muslims' memorial was an elaborate document. In it the representatives of the community told His Highness that " no single man without the help and co-operation of others could

look after the welfare of a vast territory like Jammu and Kashmir and the people could not enjoy peace and prosperity unless they were afforded suitable opportunity to influence and criticise the work of the executive responsible for the observance of such laws." So it was necessary that "an immediate assurance be given to the people to the effect that in future they would be treated in accordance with some definite constitution and a declaration may be immediately made that your Highness' Government will be based on constitutional principles." An attempt was made in this memorial even to visualise this constitution and according to it "every citizen of the State should be eligible for election to the Assembly. Seventy per cent members should be elected, Ministers should be responsible to the Ruler, but if seventy per cent of the members of the Legislature pass a resolution to the effect that they have no confidence in a certain Minister, that Minister should be forthwith relieved of his duty." Of course the Muslims wanted the strength of their population to be reflected in the numerical strength of the Assembly as well as the Ministry. The memorialists demanded a declaration of fundamental rights which would guarantee "perfect religious freedom, freedom of assemblage, freedom of speech, freedom of press, and equality of rights and treatment for all State subjects in all respects." In the matter of recruitment to services the Muslims demanded that "seventy per cent of these should be given to them in all grades, and the basis of recruitment should be the minimum

qualifications."

Another demand of the Muslims was that "the people of Kashmir should be granted the right of possessing arms like their fellow subjects of the Jammu Province." To improve the backwardness in education, the memorialists requested that Mr. Sharp's recommendations referred to earlier in this book should be adopted immediately. There were some other minor demands regarding zemindars, military, customs and labour.

It is interesting to note that in this memorial, for the first time in the history of Dogra rule, a demand was publicly made that "a fixed percentage of the total income of the State should be set apart as privy purse for the Maharaja Bahadur and his family."

A close study of these memorials brings out one undeniable truth in broad outline that the outsiders had by this time begun to exploit the communal tendencies of the different sections of the Kashmir public in their own interests. It was thus that the Sikh representatives demanded that "the condition of being a State subject should be waived in the case of Sikh recruitment in the Army. In the matter of recruitment to Civil Departments all domiciled Sikhs should be eligible for appointment with the hereditary State subjects." The Muslims said that "if Muslim subjects of the State are not available to fill the posts, recruitment should be made from the Muslims outside the State." A majority of the Hindus also favoured this view in regard to their own community and made such a demand. Perhaps

it was in view of this attitude that the Dalal Committee had recommended that while it was good to reserve appointments for State subjects it was not right that the " policy of reserving them for hereditary State subjects should be continued." Happily the State subjects realised their mistake in making such demands before it was too late, and no change was made in the definition of the State subject.

His Highness gave replies to all these memorials as the occasion demanded and assured the people through the memorialists that " a Commission would be appointed for thrashing out these questions in detail, which would consist of official and non-official members representing all communities concerned and would be presided over by an officer belonging to none of them."

The Commission was accordingly appointed under orders of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur, dated the 12th of November, 1931. It consisted of four non-official members presided over by a European officer, Mr. (now Sir) B. J. Glancy, of the Foreign and Political Department of Government of India, whose services were lent to the Jammu and Kashmir State by the Government of India at His Highness' request. The four non-official members were made up of Kh. G. A. Ashai, one Muslim, and Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, one Hindu, from the Kashmir province, and Ch. Ghulam Abbas, one Muslim, and Lok Nath Sharma, one Hindu, from the Jammu province, each nominated by their respective communities. The function of the Commission was to enquire into and report on the various complaints

of a religious or a general nature already submitted to His Highness' Government and also such complaints as might be directly laid before the Commission.

In the month of December 1931 the Hindu community of Jammu decided to recall their member from the Commission, the reason assigned being that the Commission found itself unable to exclude from the scope of its enquiry questions relating to the Hindu Law of inheritance. The Commission accordingly, with the approval of His Highness' Government, continued its sittings with three non-official members only (two Muslims and one Hindu) instead of four as originally constituted.

The report of the Grievances Enquiry Commission is a document of great importance, as it established beyond doubt that real grievances existed which needed redress. The main recommendations of the Commission were readily accepted by His Highness. According to these all religious buildings of the Muslims in possession of the Government were restored to them, the Hindu Law of inheritance was allowed to remain, as it was found by the Commission that no religious grievance of the Muslims could be admitted on this account.

It was recommended that the educational development should be strenuously taken in hand especially in regard to primary schools. An increase in the number of Muslim teachers and the appointment of a special officer for supervising and promoting Muslim education was also recommended. In the matter of distribution of Government services the

following recommendations were made :—

(*a*) Minimum qualifications should not be pitched unnecessarily high.

(*b*) All vacancies should be effectively advertised and similar action should be taken as regards all scholarships intended to provide equipment in Government services.

(*c*) Effective measures should be taken to provide a system of appointment and a machinery for supervising that system in such a way as to prevent the due interests of any community from being neglected.

Dealing with land problem the Commissioners observed :

" Proprietary rights should be granted in all respects to all lands of which the ownership is retained by the State and right of occupancy is enjoyed by the private persons. The grant of proprietary rights would be greatly appreciated and would make for increased contentment and stability."

The poor peasant and his immediate problems also were not totally ignored. Said the Commission :—

" Kahcharai (Grazing Tax) should be forthwith suspended in certain specified areas, and action should be taken to see that the demand does not press too heavily on other portions of the State. All possible care should be taken to see that the existing rights of the agriculturists are not in any way impaired by privileges conferred on other classes. The benefit of concessions granted to the agriculturists at the time of Raj Tilak ceremony (His Highness' accession) should be fully secured to them. Strenuous endeavours should be made to put an end to all authorised exactions. Decentralisation of power is desirable in many directions in order that Ministers and Heads of Departments may have time to supervise more effectively the officers under their control."

As regards *begar*, which was still practised by

officials, the Commission recommended :—

> "His Highness' orders in respect to Kar-i-Sarkar (Labour requisitioned for State purposes) should be strictly enforced and payment should be made at proper rates for all services rendered."

And lastly about unemployment and industrialisation the Commissioners said :—

> "The promotion of industries should receive the earliest attention of the State authorities. Industrial developments are at the present time of the utmost importance as it is highly desirable to provide an outlet for employment."

The recommendations of this Commission satisfied the Muslims to a large extent. Kashmiri Pandits, however, felt aggrieved over the minimum qualification test for recruitment to services. They complained that "nowhere in the world and at no stage of human history have able applicants for offices been told that though possessed of higher abilities than other competitors in the field, they cannot be appointed, because they are the members of the minority community. The general practice is and has been the opposite." They disowned me who represented them on the Commission and started what was popularly known as "Roti agitation" as protest against the recommendations of the Commission. More than one hundred people were arrested. But after a fortnight the leaders gave an undertaking to submit their grievances to the Government in a constitutional way, and the matter came to an end.

The outcome of this agitation, it may be observed incidentally, changed the leadership of the Yuvak Sabha and consequently of the Kashmiri Pandit

Community. The group of young men who had mostly independently done excellent work during the Maharaj Gunj riots not only in collecting and sifting and presenting evidence for the Riots Enquiry Committee but, what was more praiseworthy, in visiting the affected parts of the city and distributing relief and keeping up the morale of the minority, definitely came to an end. This leadership was necessarily immature and idealistic but, to a large degree, nationalistic in ambition. It was followed now by a leadership, pronouncedly communal in outlook and aim. But there was another difference. The former Yuvak Sabha leadership was guided and helped by a group of State servants which, among others, included Pandits Mahesh Chandra Raina, Tota Koul Jalali, Shankar Lal Koul, Professors Jia Lal Koul, and R.K. Bhan, who were members of the Kashmiri Pandits' Uplift Association, a body approved and sanctioned by the Government, which State servants could join as members and office-bearers. The new leaders were independent of such guidance and advice ; it was more independent but way-ward too, and perhaps more egoistic and less con structive.

At the termination of the labours of this Commission, Mr. B. J. Glancy submitted a report to His Highness' Government as to " how the then existing regulations with regard to matters such as the establishment of societies and associations and the free expression of opinion either in public meetings or in the press should be modified as to bring the State legislation into conformity with the law

prevailing in British India." Regulations were subsequently drafted on the basis of these recommendations and passed into law. I shall discuss these laws next while dealing with the constitutional advance that the people of the State enjoy at present and the freedom of the press that is allowed to them.

## CHAPTER VII

### From Communalism to Nationalism

Communalism was unknown in Kashmir till 1931. Even when the Pathans and Sikhs ruled the country and maltreated its people more or less on religious grounds, the masses had nothing but brotherly love for one another. As a matter of fact it was the support of Muslim peasants of Kashmir that made it possible for a Pandit to escape from the clutches of the Pathan Ruler and then approach Ranjit Singh for help of the Sikhs to free the valley. If there was any communalism, it existed among the upper classes; the general mass of people were entirely free from it.

Racially, culturally and linguistically the Hindus and Muslims living in Kashmir are practically one. Barring a few exceptions, the overwhelming majority of the Muslims of Kashmir comes from the same Aryan stock as the Pandits; the same blood flows in their veins. Only their religions differ. It is not, therefore, surprising that when fanaticism does not possess them they like to live amicably and peacefully with each other.

The movement of 1931 was a spontaneous mass uprising. It had political and economic causes behind it. Disappointed in every manner and finding no other way of escape from the tyrannies of life, the masses stood up against the extant order which was maintained by the undemocratic and wooden Government of the time. They wanted a revolutionary change and were prepared to sacrifice everything they possessed, even their very lives, to bring it about. But they were inexperienced and had no well-tried leader to guide them. Therefore they fell into the hands of the upper classes who had a better knowledge of things and their own interests, and who knew how to use for their own ends this colossal energy that had been unloosened by the mass uprising. India is a country that is, in certain respects, still passing through the middle ages. People are religion-ridden. It was not therefore difficult for the Muslim bourgeoisie to give the movement a religious colouring and make the Muslim masses believe that they had suffered because the unbelievers were the rulers of the State and dominated in every walk of life. The purpose underlying this move of the Muslim upper classes was to utilise the forces of the masses against the superiority of the Hindu bourgeoisie which, we have seen, had been established to a great extent under the Dogra rule and was still in the process of its consolidation.

But the upper class Muslims were timorous and cowardly. They had big vested interests in the country; they would not like to come into direct clash with the constituted authority and stake every-

thing they had. Some of them had played the game in 1924, lost it, and suffered for a long time. No one dared to repeat the experiment. All of them were doubtful about the results. Naturally, therefore, young men with little stake in the country and belonging to the class of petty bourgeoisie came forward to lead the movement. They had great sympathies with the masses though, not being of them, they did not and could not know their hardships and miseries. Besides, these young men were themselves inexperienced and raw. They could be influenced in any way and (as we shall see presently) they were led astray for a long time by the upper classes of the Muslims and became responsible for turning a national mass movement into a communal and sectional struggle. But it must be recognised that, at the outset, that is, before July 1931, some Muslim leaders were influenced more by the distressing economic and social backwardness of the masses than by any other considerations. They had therefore little of communalism in them. As a matter of fact there are dozens of speeches on record which were delivered by these Muslim leaders before the disturbance of 1931, in which persistent appeals were made by them to the Hindus to join the common struggle for the emancipation of their motherland, in which they were asked to fight for the achievement of fundamental rights and civil liberties, in which exhortations were made to them not to tolerate this undemocratic and irresponsible rule which was grinding every section of the people living in the State. It was in the interests of the

authorities and the Government to suppress this side of the issue as far as they could, in order that the real causes underlying the movement might remain hidden. After they had been able to find out the cause in the communal clash of 13th July, 1931, it was their great endeavour, first, to turn it into a thorough communal movement and, then, mercilessly to suppress it. Yet at times they could not help observing that in the beginning the movement was not directed against the Hindus but against the Government. "It appears to me," wrote Mr. Middleton, "that the Mussalman allegation regarding the non-communal nature of their agitation was substantially correct in the earlier stages thereof."

The 13th of July 1931 proved a day of surprises for all. The world was surprised to find the slumbering Kashmiri awakened all at once. The Hindus were terrified to see Muslims coming into their own. "I think we agree that nobody anticipated that Kashmiri mob would behave in the way it did; consequently no disturbances were anticipated," admitted Mr. Wakefield, the Minister for Law and Order, before the Srinagar Riots Enquiry Committee. The chicken-hearted Muslim bourgeoisie did not believe that the might of the Muslim masses was so great. When they realised it after all, they lost no time in turning the wheel of the movement towards their own interests. They realised that it was no longer dangerous to identify themselves with the movement.

The 13th of July proved the towering success of the movement as the masses asserted themselves

on this day. But it also changed the basic nature of the fight as from then onwards the movement was influenced more by the upper classes of the Muslims, and the masses gradually left the ranks till it became completely a bourgeoisie movement in the State.

The middle and upper classes of the Muslims instinctively realised that if the opportunity was to be utilised against the Hindu Government and the upper classes of the Hindus, the movement must assume entirely a communal shape. The leadership must become thoroughly religious. For this purpose it was necessary that the leadership must change. Those believing in the upliftment of the masses and their cause must go to the background and only those men should take the command and the charge of the situation who shall have no hesitation in taking behests from the upper classes and carry them out to their liking. There was another possibility to achieve this end. The then existing leaders of the movement could change their attitude and, forgetting their sympathies with the masses, accept this ideology. In that case there was no necessity of changing the leadership. The old leadership could continue with the approval of the upper classes of the Muslims.

Evidently some of the ten representatives of the Muslims could be purchased more easily than others. For good reasons *Mir Waiz* Usuf Shah valunteered himself to serve as the henchman of the vested interests. He was successful in enticing away a few leaders of the movement and a number of wokers to his side. But the rank and file of the movement remained with Mr. S. M. Abdullah who became

the acknowledged leader of the masses from that time. The other *Mir Waiz* as also the remaining representatives came under his banner.

At the close of the year 1931 this division became clear and pronounced. The Kashmir Government encouraged the separation and significantly enough supported *Mir Waiz* Usuf Shah, who was ultimately granted a *jagir* for his loyal tendencies. Thus began that internal dissension in the Muslim politics of Kashmir which resulted in dangerous party factions, and which persists to this day. For a time the struggle between these two parties was based on the class interests of the Muslims, the upper classes fighting against the lower classes with Usuf Shah and Abdullah as their respective mouthpieces, and both struggling for supremacy in the affairs of the State. But soon the Abdullahites were influenced by the upper class ideology which they gradually owned. They forsook their historical role and abandoned the masses. Naturally the masses also in their turn abandoned them. The differences between Usuf Shahis and Abdullahites, however, persisted; but thereafter they became personal; and the propaganda which was carried on by either party in this connection was of a filthy nature and conducted on a very low level. It was nothing more than a rivalry to become popular among the middle and the upper classes of the Muslims. The masses had entirely gone out of the picture and certainly out of their vision.

Already at the time when the Glancy recommendations were published, the upper classes of the

Muslims had completely assumed the command of the movement. That much is evident from the recommendations themselves.

The Government was forced to order the inquiry under pressure of mass uprising. But the demands were formulated and pressed by the upper classes before the Commission, with the result that no strong and substantial recommendation was made to ameliorate the distressing condition of the peasantry. Nothing was done to save them from the wretched poverty in which they were eking out a miserable existence. Yet the recommendations were greatly welcomed and appreciated by the Muslim leaders in the name of the community as a whole.

During the summer of 1932, soon after the Glancy Report was published, the Muslim leaders felt that to safeguard the interests of the Mussalmans —which by now were no more than the interests of the upper and middle classes—the establishment of some organisation was necessary. The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was therefore founded. Its first session was held at Srinagar on the 15th, 16th and 17th October, 1932, when thousands of Muslims attended it. Obviously both Usuf Shahis and Abdullahites had by this time reconciled themselves with the upper class ideology. Although the Conference was primarily a function of the Abdullah party, *Mir Waiz* Usuf Shah willingly participated in its deliberations. The *Mir Waiz* did not, however, take any share in the subsequent sessions of the Conference as the personal differences had become more acute with the passage of time.

The All Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference remained in existence till June 1938. It held six annual sessions in all. The first, second, fifth and sixth Sessions which were held at Srinagar, Mirpore, Poonch and Jammu respectively, were presided over by Mr. S. M. Abdullah. The third Session was held at Sopore under the presidency of Mian Ahmad Yar, while the fourth Session was held at Srinagar with Chaudhri Ghulam Abbas in the chair.

The history of the Muslim Conference is nothing but the record of the struggle of the middle and the upper classes of Muslims during the period 1932—38 for the achievement of their rights. By clever manœuvring these people had been able to achieve substantial gains in the shape of Glancy recommendations. They wanted to preserve them as best they could. They desired to see that these recommendations were carried out, especially the ones that benefited them most. A large number of the resolutions of the Conference and the major portions of the Presidential Addresses are devoted to the grievance that the recommendation of the Glancy Commission about distribution of State services among various communities was not impartially carried out. As a matter of fact in the spring of 1933 there was a commotion in Muslim political circles in Srinagar over this issue. The Prime Minister and the Home Minister had to come from Jammu to pacify the Muslims. There was again a serious clash between the Muslims and the authorities in the month of January 1934, when an

ultimatum was given to the Government by the Young Men's Muslim Association, started that very year, to accept their demands, chief among which was immediate removal of important non-Muslim officials from Srinagar. On January 28, 1934, the Government promulgated the regulation 19-L. and exiled seven leaders under its provisions. The agitation spread to the villages. Hundreds of people were arrested and heavy fines were imposed on them. In some cases private property was auctioned to pay the fines. At Pulwama and Bijbehara, mobs went out of control on 2nd February and 6th February respectively and fire had to be opened at both places. Ten people were killed at the former village and three at the latter, and dozens were injured as a result of these firings. Muslims in Bijbehara were so terrified that most of them left the village to escape official repression. And yet, painfully enough, all this was done by the young Muslim leaders to obtain more jobs for the upper and middle classes of the Muslims in Government employment! At this stage the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference met on 10th February at Sialkot, outside the State territories, in order that the exiled leaders might be able to take part, to consider the political situation which had developed. The Committee suspended the Constitution of the Conference and appointed Ch. Ghulam Abbas as Dictator with the purpose of either getting the grievances of Muslims redressed by correspondence with the Government or by launching a movement of Civil Disobedience. Mr. Abbas sent a memorial to the Prime Minister,

Col. E. J. D. Colvin, in which he complained that the Government had not fully implemented the recommendations of the Glancy Commission, and demanded that it should do so immediately. The Prime Minister wanted to discuss the whole matter personally with Mr. Abbas, but refused to commit himself in advance. Mr. Abbas, rather overconfident of the mass support to his reckless programme, unwisely and abruptly broke the negotiations and started his movement. There was great disappointment in store for him and the Muslims of his way of thinking. He was arrested and sentenced to one year's imprisonment. A few of his colleagues were treated in the same manner, when they held demonstrations subsequently in the streets of Jammu for some days as a protest against the attitude of the Government. The Muslims as a whole remained calm and the masses cold. The movement fizzled out within a couple of weeks.

The failure of the campaign made the Muslims think. The leadership now realised their mistake in having alienated the mass support. Some of them felt that they had identified themselves too much with the upper class interests. There were three main reasons that fostered this conviction.

Firstly, as we have seen from the very beginning, the Muslims realised that in political matters non-Muslim interests were not altogether distinct from the Muslim interests. Fundamentally they were similar. The unfortunate communal clashes on the 13th July at Srinagar and during November and December of 1931 at Mirpore made it difficult for them to

think clearly for some time. But from the Presidential Address of the first Muslim Conference we find that the idea had not been completely abandoned. In this document it is recorded that "the Kashmir movement is not communal but has come into existence to get the grievances of all classes of people redressed. We assure our Hindu and Sikh brothers that we are prepared to help them in the same manner as we do the Mussalmans. Our country cannot progress until we learn to live amicably with one another. That is possible only when we respect our mutual rights." Such sentiments were expressed from time to time by a few, (though very few) responsible leaders of the Muslim Conference. Not only this. In March 1933, the Working Committeee of the Muslim Conference constituted a sub-committee to find out ways and means of uniting Hindus and Muslims. This Committee could not function, but it indicates that the idea of a joint action was present in certain minds in the Conference.

Secondly, when the Glancy recommendations began to have effect, a large number of Muslims were appointed to Government posts in all ranks and grades. Some of the Muslim educated young men got responsible and decent jobs in the State services. Some who were already in service were raised to higher grades out of their turn and over the heads of their non-Muslim colleagues. Muslim masses had high hopes in the Muslim employees but were greatly disappointed. They had been told throughout by their leaders that the Government servants ill-treated the people because they were

Hindus and the masses were Muslim. So when the Muslim servants were sufficiently recruited in many departments, better treatment was expected by them. This did not happen. On the other hand many Muslim officials proved more corrupt and unscrupulous and less sympathetic. The masses everywhere complained against them. Imagine the bewilderment of a Muslim leader when Muslim peasants in a village demanded the reversion of a transferred Hindu official in place of a hated Muslim. And this happened not at one place and at one time, but on several occasions and at many places. This state of affairs made honest, thoughtful and sincere leaders revise their policy and programme. Some of the prominent ones publicly condemned the Muslim employees and admitted that there was no difference between the Hindu officials and Muslim officials. They belonged to the same class and were equally selfish.

Differences, however, arose over this point among the Muslim leaders themselves. Some of them, who had been fully absorbed by the middle classes and could not see the historic role of the movement, considered the condemnation of the Muslim officials as unwise and undiplomatic. Others who wanted to help the masses went forward. They were determined to expose the Muslim vested interests as they had exposed the Hindu vested interests before.

Thirdly, in April 1934 the Kashmir Government announced the constitution of the Legislative Assembly which was granted to the people of

Kashmir. The first Assembly was held in the autumn of that year at Srinagar. The Royal Proclamation of His Highness which was delivered while inaugurating the first historic Assembly, raised high hopes in the people. But soon after it became evident that the Assembly was powerless. The Government played one party against the other, Hindus against the Muslims, nominated members against the elected members. Even when they failed in this in some important public matters and all the heterogenous elements united in demanding a certain concession, the Government could turn it down. The vehement protests of the representatives of the people would come to nothing.

Muslim leaders realised that these partial reforms could not help the people to come to their own. What was needed was the establishment of a system of Government responsible to the people. Evidently this could not be possible without the co-operation of the non-Muslim classes, at any rate, the progressive sections among them. To achieve this end, therefore, they began to direct their thought and energy.

Moreover, the mass revolt of the Muslims and the energy and power underlying it had opened the eyes of the Hindus. From the very beginning of the movement a few of them had been of opinion that the Government should treat the Muslims more humanely and less harshly and that they should be granted their legitimate rights. But the communal clashes had befogged the vision of the non-Muslims as a whole. When, however, the Muslim leadership

began to develop the movement on a broader basis in the beginning of 1934, liberal Hindus were not wanting to come forward and express their consent to join the ranks. In the Legislative Assembly more often than not many elected non-Muslim members voted with the Muslim Conference Party when the national interests were at stake or something beneficial for the whole of the country was demanded. As a matter of fact one of the elected Sikh members of the Legislature, S. Budh Singh, proved more radical than the Conference Party members where the interests of the masses were concerned. He put the party in an embarrassing position when he resigned over the issue of grazing tax in which the Government had acted in a perfidious manner. Almost all the members of the party had to resign subsequently to save their face and prove their *bona fides* before the masses! Astonishment descended upon an unexpectant outside world when it read in the newspapers in autumn 1936 that the entire block of the elected members with the solitary exception of one Hindu member walked out of the Kashmir Assembly as a protest against the unsympathetic attitude which was persistently maintained by the Government towards the public demands. This step was not taken at the spur of the moment but was a deliberate and premeditated move as these walkouts continued for a number of days and all these representatives of the public refused to take part in the discussions on the next year's budget when it was introduced in the Assembly by the Finance Member. Commenting on this

the *Tribune* of Lahore wrote :—

"From the events that have happened in the Assembly during the last few days it is evident that there is a general awakening in the State and that the people can no longer be satisfied with the toy legislature, though it may be given the grand eloquent name of Praja Sabha."

On 8th May, 1936, the Muslim Conference Party observed a Responsible Government Day throughout the length and breadth of the State. An appeal had been made by the President of the Conference to non-Muslims to participate in the function. This did not go in vain. For at many places, notably Srinagar, Poonch and Jammu, presidents of the public meetings held in this connection as also the principal speakers at them were either Hindus or Sikhs.

Such action on the part of the Muslims and ready response from the side of the progressive Hindus and Sikhs paved the way for establishment of a joint party. Simultaneously Muslim leaders realised that their policy and programme must be in conformity with that of the Indian National Congress and not any communal organisation in British India. The publication of a correspondence between Mahatma Gandhi, Pt. Jawahar Lal Nehru and myself about Kashmir politics on the 19th of August, 1936, confirmed this belief. Nationalist thought was born.

Certain forces began to move rapidly in Kashmir after this. It is not very much known that a few patriotic persons made an attempt as far back as 1933 to lay the foundation of the Kashmir National Conference. The first provisional committee was,

in fact, formed on August 7, 1933, under the presidentship of Syed Ahmad Shah Gilani, a Christian. Its Secretary was Pandit Radhey Nath Kaul. I was also a member of this body. But the attempt proved abortive. A party of young men with considerable influence came into existence in 1936 in the form of Kashmir Youth League which believed in the equality of all people in the State and held that there was no distinction between young men or young women on the basis of the religious beliefs they professed. The objects of the League were (*a*) to organise young men and young women for the service of the country, (*b*) to fight by all legitimate means for the realisation of responsible Government in the State, (*c*) to work for the economic, social and cultural uplift of the people. A Mazdur and Kisan Sabha with the aim of organising the labourers and workers was formed in August 1937 in Srinagar. The Congress Committees also came into existence both in Srinagar and at Jammu. On November 7, 1936, the first Conference of the Students was held in Kashmir. It held its second annual session in the autum of 1937 under the presidentship of Dr. Ashraf, Secretary of the All-India Congress Committee. These organisations did not make any headway and could not develop on a broad basis. But the nationalist thought received wide publicity and more and more people came under its sway.

In his address delivered to the sixth annual session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference on the 26th of March, 1938, at Jammu, the

President said :—

"Like us the large majority of Hindus and Sikhs in the State have immensely suffered at the hands of irresponsible Government. They are also steeped in deep ignorance, have to pay large taxes and are in debt and starving. Establishment of responsible Government is as much a necessity for them as for us. Sooner or later these people are bound to join our ranks. No amount of propaganda can keep them away from us."

Again :—

"The main problem therefore now before us is to organise joint action and a united front against the forces that stand in our way in the achievement of our goal. This will require rechristening of our organisation as a non-communal political body and introducing certain amendments in its constitution and its rules."

He added :—

"I reiterate today what I have said so often. Firstly we must end communalism by ceasing to think in terms of Muslims and non-Muslims when discussing our political problems. Secondly there must be universal suffrage on the basis of joint electorates. Without these two democracy is lifeless."

Mark an admission :—

"You complain that the Hindus belonging to the vested interests are reactionary and stand in the way of our progress. But have we not had the same experience in the case of capitalist Muslims also? It is significant as well as hopeful that in spite of many difficulties in their way some non-Muslims have co-operated with us though their number is very small. Their sincerity and moral courage make us feel their strength. We must therefore open our doors to all such Hindus and Sikhs who, like ourselves, believe in the freedom of their country from the shackles of an irresponsible rule."

A resolution was formally moved in this session of the Muslim Conference proposing a change in the

name and the constitution of the Conference. Unfortunately certain constitutional objections of a technical nature stood in the way and the matter had to be postponed.

On the 28th of June, 1938, the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference met at Srinagar and after a heated discussion for about 52 hours passed the following resolution :—

"Whereas in the opinion of the Working Committee the time has now come when all the progressive forces in the country should be rallied under one banner to fight for the achievement of responsible Government the Working Committee recommends to the General Council that in the forthcoming annual session of the Conference the name and constitution of the organisation be so altered and amended that all such people who desire to participate in this political struggle may easily become members of the Conference irrespective of their caste, creed or religion."

The Government did not look with equanimity on these happenings. It appears they felt uneasy at this new trend of affairs in the politics of the State. As usual the Muslim Conference Party observed 5th August, 1938 as Responsible Government Day, when largely attended public meetings were held all over the State and a resolution was adopted "repudiating the existing system of irresponsible Government and expressing full faith in the establishment of complete Responsible Government which alone could cure the ills of the people." Appeals were made to all patriotic persons "to muster under the banner of freedom and prepare for the coming struggle for victory

which alone could usher in complete political, economic and social emancipation." As before many non-Muslims participated in the observance of the Day.

During the month of August 1938 there were many unfortunate incidents which brought the Government and the leaders into a conflict. Soon after the Responsible Government Day was observed on August 5, the Government set into motion its machinery of repression. Some of the prominent workers were warned not to carry on their political activities or deliver speeches in public which were calculated to promote disaffection against the Government.

By the end of August it became evident that a conflict was inevitable. Neither the leaders of the Muslim Conference nor the patriotic Hindus who were prepared to make sacrifices for the cause of Responsible Government wanted to conduct this fight on communal lines. Everyone was anxious to make it a purely political issue. Owing to the non-existence of a non-communal organisation, the leaders had not bargained for a struggle which came in spite of themselves. But now that it was almost certain they wanted to acquaint the country and the Government with their intentions and their minimum demands. A manifesto was therefore published on the 29th of August under the signatures of twelve prominent Hindu, Muslim and Sikh

leaders of a national bent of mind.*

The signatories to this manifesto declared that the movement was nation-wide and not confined to any particular community or section of the public and that "all classes of people had begun participating in it with the fullest consciousness of the issues it involves." The ultimate goal of the movement according to these leaders was to bring about complete change in the social and political outlook of the people and to achieve complete responsible Government under the ægis of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur. Immediately the signatories aimed at securing the elementary and basic rights of citizenship.

The following observations made in the preamble of the manifesto are worthy of note :—

"Our movement has a gigantic urge behind it. It is the urge of hunger and starvation which propels it onwards in even most adverse circumstances.

"The ever-growing menace of unemployment amongst our educated young men and also among the illiterate masses in the country, the incidence of numerous taxes, the burden of

---

*The names of the signatories are :

1. Sh. Mohammad Abdullah.
2. M. M. Sayeed.
3. G. M. Sadiq.
4. Mian Ahmad Yar.
5. M. A. Beg.
6. Pt. Kashyap Bandhu.
7. Pt. Prem Nath Bazaz.
8. S. Budh Singh.
9. Pt. Jia Lal Kilam.
10. Ghulam Mohammad Bakshi.
11. Pt. Sham Lal Saraf.
12. Dr. Shamboo Nath Peshin.

exhorbitant revenue, the appalling waste of human life due to want of adequate modern medical assistance, the miserable plight of uncared for thousands of labourers outside the State boundaries, and, in face of all this, the patronage that is being extended in the shape of subsidies and other amenities to outside capitalists, as also the top-heavy administration that daily becomes heavier,—point to only one direction that the present conditions can never be better as long as a change is not made in the basic principles underlying the present system of Government.

"Our cause is both righteous, reasonable and just. We want to be the makers of our own destinies and we want to shape the ends of things according to our choice."

These patriotic and nationalistic sentiments from those who had taken a full share in communal struggles for more than half a dozen years are significant. They show the remarkable change that had taken place in the minds of the people of Kashmir, at any rate, a good many of them. The struggle that followed was unique and unparalleled in the political history of Kashmir. Hindus fought side by side with the Muslims. It was a political campaign in the right sense of the term. There was no religious basis or compromise or pact about it. The Kashmir Movement had come out of the mud of communalism and was shining in all its brilliance on the high pedestal of nationalism.

We need not go into the details of this fight. The Government was fully prepared to meet the situation with its humane ordinance 19-L and other laws, such as the Seditious Meetings Act of 1914. The policy of severest repression was inaugurated. Hundreds of *satyagrahis* were arrested. Although among those who were put

behind the prison bars were such respected people as municipal commissioners, lawyers, journalists, doctors, leading business men and college students, yet the Government called them *goondas* in their press *communiques.*

Having arrested the foremost leaders, the Government found that the movement had spread to other parts of the valley. They extended their Ordinance law and by ruthless repression in the shape of heavy fines and long terms of imprisonment, which followed summary trials, brought the situation "under control."

# CHAPTER VIII

## The Problem of State Services

We have noticed that in the recent politics of the State by far the most important problem has been the distribution of Government services among different communities living in the country. This is the result of the uneven development of these communities. But it must be recognised that the policy of the Government in this respect was, before 1932, anything but impartial and just.

Obviously the problem of the State services does not affect the masses. Even an equitable distribution of these services, if that were made by the Government, would not help the people to better their economic condition. Muslim leaders always demanded a share in the services in the name of their community. But it was found that when a sufficient number of Muslims was recruited, the Muslim masses did not suffer less, but in some cases even more terribly at the hands of Muslim officials than they had done before at the hands of non-Muslims. What the masses really need is

that society be reconstructed on such principles that they too are treated as human beings and allowed to live like them. They want some fair solution of their economic problems. Whether their co-religionists get a fair share in Government services or not does not concern them. It is only the middle and the upper classes among the Muslims who put their own demands in the mouth of the masses and tell the world that these are the demands of the community. At any rate, that is what happened in Kashmir.

There are two kinds of Government services. First, recruitment in the Army and second, employment in the Civil Departments of the State. The people of Kashmir are debarred from entering the Army. They are considered a non-martial race, unfit to serve in the State forces. The descendants of the great conquerer, Lalitaditya, unworthy to be of any use in the Army! This is neither the time nor the place to discuss the subject at length except as it touches the problem of employment in Government services. It is true that during the Pathan rule the martial spirit of the Kashmiris received a vital blow and thenceforward slowly deadened, but the honour of emasculating them, declaring them unfit, and closing the doors of the Army on them was left to the Dogra Rajputs. Never before in the history of Kashmir was such a course adopted by an alien ruler during the period of his domination. This the Dogras seem to have learnt from the British Army Policy in India. Whatever the present Government may say, the fact cannot

be denied that this attitude is born of utter distrust of the people of Kashmir, which the Dogra rulers have entertained. They are constantly afraid of the superiority of the Kashmiris.

Kashmiris have quite naturally and rightly resented this treatment. Representations were repeatedly made to the Government to remove this ban, but to no purpose. The Glancy Commission admitted that claims had been received from almost every community about representation in the military services, but they considered the disturbed conditions then present a difficulty in the way of a change in the class composition of the State forces. They were of opinion that the question should be carefully examined as soon as circumstances permit. It need hardly be said that the question was never reopened although normal times have returned long since. It does not suit the politics of the Dogras and they do not like that their brethren of the Kashmir Province should get a chance to enter what is now a close preserve for them. It must be remembered in this connection that the annual expenditure on the Army as estimated for the year 1997-98 is Rs. 62,25,000.

With the whole army open to them and a preferential treatment in the higher civil posts, it is not surprising that the educated Dogras of Jammu in general and the Rajputs in particular do not feel any pangs of unemployment. As a matter of fact the value of a Rajput graduate is ten times more than that of a Kashmiri Pandit. No complaint of unemployment among the educated Dogras was

expressed before any of the three official Commissions which were appointed by the Government to investigate the causes of the political and communal disturbances in the State. In fact, such a problem does not exist for them.

Thus, so far as the army is concerned. Let us now see the condition of the Civil Departments. During the reign of Maharaja Partap Singh the civil administration was reorganised and most of the departments were established on modern lines. This necessitated the importation of educated and trained officials from outside to man the offices and boss the departments. Within a few years' time a large number of Punjabis occupied almost all high positions in the Civil Departments. They in turn brought with them large numbers of less educated relations, friends and acquaintances and appointed them on higher jobs of clerks in all the offices of the State. Thus the indigenous people were gradually pushed out and the whole administration was dominated by outsiders. The brunt had to be mainly borne by the people of Kashmir. Their plight was really pitiable. They had been debarred from military services and were ousted from the civil administration. The Muslims did not realise this situation for two reasons. Educationally they were very backward. They also knew that it was a non-Muslim Government and they could expect little justice from it. But the case was different with the Kashmiri Pandits. They had been conspicuous in the civil administration from times immemorial. As clerks they had outshone all others. Even the

Mughal and the Pathan rulers had to acknowledge their superiority in keeping accounts. Kashmiri Pandits were neither illiterate nor could they be considered political pariahs in a Hindu Raj. Therefore they bitterly resented this new order of things and kept on voicing their grievances.

We have already mentioned a letter of the Government of India which was sent to the Kashmir Administration in 1889 instructing them that in the matter of State services the *mulkies* should be given preference over outsiders. This command of the Imperial Government would have helped the Kashmiri Pandits. But the circular did not prove of much value as it was not easy to turn out the outsiders once they had occupied the positions of vantage in all offices and departments of the Kashmir Government.

Facilities for receiving higher education were provided to the people of Kashmir in the first decade of the present century. Kashmiri Pandits were the first to take advantage of these facilities. It did not take them many years to get themselves fully qualified for higher posts in the offices and several other departments of the State. But the jobs were already occupied. A ceaseless fight ensued. It was a struggle conducted by the educated Hindu young men of Kashmir against the outsiders who had usurped the civil administration of the State during the days when people of Kashmir were backward in education. The struggle began in about 1910 A.D. It took the form of a deep-seated hatred against the Punjabis. It ended

in 1927 A.D. only when a law defining the term "State subject" was passed, to the entire satisfaction of the people living in the country.

The Muslims did not, however, remain unconcerned and totally unaffected all this while. If the great majority among them did not take kindly to modern education, a small fraction of them belonging to the richer, upper and middle classes were educated by the end of the second decade. They were not treated well. As we saw, Mr. Sharp's recommendations were deliberately and mischievously shelved by the Punjabi Hindu officials to deprive the Muslims from advancing in the sphere of education. When in spite of this dreadful opposition some of them had equipped themselves with the necessary qualifications, they were positively discouraged. We have discussed the reasons in the earlier part of this book which contributed to make the Kashmir movement communal in outlook. This attitude of the Hindu officials was certainly one of the main factors.

For the first time, in the Indian struggle for Independence, masses took a prominent part in the non-co-operation movement of 1922. Although the States' people did not take any part in this campaign, it did not leave the Kashmir Muslims unaffected. They saw what numbers could achieve. Times had changed. The religion of the ruler alone could not be a deciding factor in the politics of a country. The will of the subject race was making its influence increasingly felt. So thought the Muslims. With them the question of getting an adequate share in

the Government services is not merely a question of more jobs for their young men. It is no doubt true that with the individual entrants into service it is only a matter of their employment on suitable posts. But to the community at large it is the problem of a voice in the Civil Administration. "Mohmmedans have a legitimate grievance and they allege that the Hindus have a preponderating voice in the Government of the State," observed the Dalal Committee, and Mr. Wakefield admitted before the Committee that "there was always this difficulty in dealing with Mohammedan agitation, that there was a substantial substratum of truth in this campaign regarding insufficiency of appointments in the State service."

On account of their most inadequate representation in Government departments Muslims had to suffer in various ways. In the Education Department the Muslims felt that the Hindu teachers and officials would not take as much interest in the spread of education among them as was necessary. In the Medical Department Muslim patients did not receive as much care as the Hindus. In the offices and courts Muslim clients were shabbily treated while the cases of Hindus were expeditiously decided. This happened almost everywhere even before 1920. When, however, the canker of communalism made its way into Indian politics, these distinctions became marked. The change prompted the Muslims to express the grievance more vociferously than before. In 1924 they became almost impatient with the Kashmir Government and, as we have seen, some

of the leading Muslims approached His Excellency Lord Reading the Viceroy of India when he was on a visit to Kashmir.

But there was a difficulty. In order that the Muslims might be adequately represented in Government Service a sufficient number of educated young men must be forthcoming; but then there was a great paucity of educated Muslims. Whenever, therefore, a voice was raised on behalf of the Muslims, the usual reply given was that they were not fully qualified to be in charge of responsible posts. In a speech which he delivered in S. P. College hall in the summer of 1923, while presiding over a Prize Distribution function, His Highness Maharaja Partap Singh said that it was not possible for him to appoint illiterate Muslims to higher posts in the administration. The grievance became more acute when Mohammedans found that they had no ability to satisfy their natural desire for a voice in the Government of the State.

The conditions were changing rapidly. By the end of the twenties many Muslims had qualified themselves not only in the local institutions but outside the State in British Indian Universities. They demanded their share in the administration. But the Hindus who were in full occupation of all departments of the State manœuvred to keep them at arm's length. Their class consciousness forbade Hindus from easily allowing Muslims to have their legitimate share in these services. It was a power in their hands; they wanted to transfer it to their next generation, to their sons, to their kith and

kin. Who were the Muslims to demand it? Nowhere in this world has power been given up easily and without a struggle by any class. The Hindus were no exception to this rule. They wanted to retain their power as long as they could. Strangely enough, even Kashmiri Pandits who had quite recently faced the outsiders and got the definition of "State Subject" passed to open the door of the higher services for themselves were also a party to making the Muslims remain where they were. Now they were more vociferous than the rest of the Hindus in giving reasons why the Muslims could not get the share they demanded. "Hindu officials deliberately discouraged the employment of Muslims and endeavoured to keep them in ignorance of any vacancies that would occur in the Government Departments, so that these vacancies could be surreptitiously filled by jobbery and nepotism," complained the Muslims before the Glancy Commission.

One of the reasons advanced by the Hindus against the Muslims was that they did not stand the tests. The Hindus took the advantage of education earlier and are therefore highly educated. They insist on appointments being given according to merit, meaning thereby that out of the applicants only that candidate who possesses the highest qualifications should be appointed to a job, irrespective of the fact whether or not such qualifications are absolutely necessary for the discharge of the duties of the post. They know that if this rule is strictly adhered to, not many posts will go to the Muslims. In certain cases, they will not get a single job in many departments. According to the

Hindus all appointments in public services should be made independent of communal considerations. This appears to be sound advice and based on principles of nationalism. But it was solely prompted by the worst type of communalism. The Hindu Government of Kashmir followed it almost till 1931. It was therefore not surprising that when merit alone was the criterion, out of 12 foreign scholarships for higher studies only one could be given to a Muslim in 1929 by the Committee presided over by Sir Albion Banerji. Mr. Wakefield who had once the temerity of inviting applications from Muslims alone for a number of posts in Srinagar Municipality, had to face a terrible opposition from the Hindu public, so much so that he was obliged to withdraw the orders under commands of His Highness!

Besides, it has been satisfactorily proved that in certain departments of the State unqualified non-Muslims had been taken in employment by the Hindu officials while Muslims of equal, if not of higher merit, were available.

The policy of appointing only the hereditary State subjects did not help the Muslims. It was beneficial to Hindus alone. As soon as a vacancy occurred, State Hindus claimed it and got it on the basis of superior merit. For Muslims, therefore, no alternative was left but to demand a share on a strictly communal basis. There were two shades of opinion in this respect. The moderates asked for a fair share which was undefined and vague. They would not demand any alteration in the definition of

the "State Subject" as they were sagacious enough to see that sooner or later this was bound to help them also. But the extremists wanted that they should get their share in public services in proportion to their population. They knew that even if the Government was prepared to consider their demand, there were not many educated young men among them to fill these jobs. So they also demanded that the orders relating to the recruitment of the "State Subjects" should be abrogated in their case and Muslims imported from outside to fill the quota.

This claim of the extremists was illogical and entirely unfounded. In the opinion of the Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee there was no substance in this claim and even Maulvi Abdullah, a leading light of the Muslims in 1931, admitted its untenability. As has rightly been pointed out by the Committee, "an overwhelmingly large proportion of the Mohammedan population is supported by agriculture and those are not men who would educate their children to seek services in Government employment. A comparison should really be made between the proportional population of the two communities engaged in service, literary profession, industries and commerce, who alone have the inclination and ability to educate their sons.........Counting of heads cannot therefore be a proper method of approach in arriving at a settlement of a proportion of Mohammedan employment in State Service, which would be aimed at by the Government."

One of the reasons why this extremist viewpoint came into existence was the most selfish attitude of the Hindus in this behalf. It would be wrong to absolve them of their share of responsibility in the matter. Had they relaxed their attitude a bit and voluntarily agreed to allow a portion of the public services to Muslims at the very outset, perhaps the history of Kashmir would have been something entirely different from what it actually has been. The more the Hindus insisted on merit and merit alone remaining the criterion of a candidate's fitness for being taken in public service, the more did the adherents of the Muslim camp turn to the extremist side, so that at last, on the eve of the 1931 disturbances, an overwhelming majority of the Muslims had veered to this viewpoint.

The Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee realised this fact, and while making their recommendations for the procuration of communal peace, they said that in their opinion "definite instructions may be issued to the Civil Service Recruiting Board to aim at employment of a particular specified proportion of Mohammedan State subjects of whatever class, so far as they were available." In order to make this recommendation effective, the Commissioners definitely opined that "if in a particular office the number of Mohammedan employees is small and the post is such as could be satisfactorily filled by a person who has passed the Matriculation examination, a Mohammedan with that qualification should be preferred even where a Hindu graduate offered himself for the post."

Ordinarily these recommendations should have satisfied the Muslims and gladdened their heart. It was a success of their viewpoint and a recognition of the righteousness of their claim. But they had boycotted the Commission and committed themselves publicly to have nothing to do with their recommendations. They, therefore, repudiated it and actually went to the length of burning a copy on a funeral pyre in Jammu. Of course the Hindus too condemned it for having recommended that the criterion of merit should be ignored in favour of Muslim recruitment in the public services of the State.

The matter was finally dealt with and decided by the Grievances Enquiry Commission popularly known as the Glancy Commission. The Muslims were fully represented on this Commission. The Commission took a statesmanlike view of all the grievances of the Muslims and comprehensively discussed them in their report. Chapter IV of the report has been solely devoted to the subject of "Employment in State Services." At the very outset the Commissioners admit that "there is no denying the fact that in the matter of State employment Muslims who form the great majority of the population are inadequately represented. The same applies to certain minor communities."

After weighing the arguments advanced from both sides, the Commissioners came to the conclusion that it was necessary that, at any rate for some time to come, minimum qualifications for employment in State Service should be fixed and they should not

be pitched unnecessarily high. It was not suggested that "there should be different standards for different communities." Such an arrangement, in the opinion of the Commission, "could only result in retarding the development of the community which had the misfortune to be so favoured." But the Commissioners frankly admitted that "merit and competition alone could not be the criterion." Here is what they say:

> "In course of time pure competition may come to regulate all appointments. But in the present state of affairs the standard should not be more exacting than efficiency demands; and those who possess qualifications in excess of that standard should not be held to deserve appointment as a matter of right."

The object of the proposals made by the Glancy Commission was to afford to every community a fair chance of representation. Regarding the Muslim claim that because their ratio in the matter of population is 78 per cent they should be given a corresponding reservation in the Government appointments, the Commissioners almost reiterated what the Srinagar Riot Enquiry Committee had observed: "It must be remembered that a vast number of Muslims find their hereditary occupation in agriculture and it is reasonable to suppose that the great majority of agriculturists will continue to prefer that occupation to any other." The Commissioners added: "While no community should be allowed to acquire a stranglehold on State employment, it must be recognised that at present certain communities are far in advance of others in the matter of education."

The recommendations of the Glancy Commission were well received by the Muslims who were amply satisfied with them and expressed this satisfaction in hundreds of meetings all over the country.

But the Hindus were sorely disappointed, partly because the educated classes among them saw that they could no more get a large share in the services as they used to get because of their higher merit, but mainly owing to the fact that the Muslim majority had after all asserted itself even under Hindu rule. Immediately on the publication of the Glancy Report, Kashmiri Pandits started an agitation unknown in the annals of the community. They repudiated the recommendations, disowned Pandit Prem Nath Bazaz, the member who sat with the Commission on their behalf, and declared that they would not rest till the recommendations were modified. A *satyagraha* was started in Srinagar. Young boys of tender age went to Government offices shouting slogans. More than a hundred volunteers were arrested. But the agitation ended after a few days' demonstrations, when all the persons imprisoned were released on giving an undertaking that they would not resort to unconstitutional methods to get their grievance redressed. The Government also gave them an assurance that the grievances and the difficulties of the community would be favourably considered.

The Glancy proposals have been carried out into effect during the last nine years. The recommendations contained in the report are advisedly and rightly vague, and so apt to be interpreted by short-

sighted, dishonest and communal-minded officials of the Government in a way suitable to their purpose. It must, however, be frankly recognised that educated Muslims have, on the whole and in spite of some Hindu officials who were communal-minded, immensely benefited by these recommendations. If anything, some of the best qualified, efficient and senior Hindu employees have suffered. For such sufferers there will be the deepest sympathy of every impartial man. But in the broader interests of the country and the future of the State this was bound to be. Politicians and statesmen who have the responsibility of steering the state barge through turbulent waters in a stormy weather, have at times reluctantly to agree to methods they do not like. "That we should forget all communal differences and should take into public services only people who are the best from the point of view of merit, is certainly a better principle; but I am afraid that we cannot attain this ideal until we reach a stage when all the communities in the State will look upon each other as brethren; when one community will not think that its cause is jeopardised by a member of another community holding a particular office. That being so, Government have to take up only what you might consider as an attitude of prosaic statesmanship, and I am afraid that from that standpoint we can neither accept the population ideal nor the pure merit ideal," said the Prime Minister of Kashmir, Dewan Bahadur (now Sir) N. Gopalaswami Ayyengar, in the State Assembly on April 10, 1938. "Considerations of practical,

though prosaic, statesmanship require that we should take note of the feelings of different communities concerned and try so to order our policy in regard to recruitment to the various services as to satisfy the legitimate aspirations of the different communities. I agree that what Government are doing now is not wholly perfect or ideal and that it is a compromise which I think no responsible person can overlook and which is necessary for instilling into the minds of the different communities a feeling of contentment: and after all the Government are looking after the equitable representation of all communities." The Prime Minister added: "It is unfortunate from an ideal point of view that people should try to insist on getting members of their own particular community on particular jobs. There is absolutely no justification for this demand. People, however, do have the notion that if they have a certain post filled by a member of their own community, their interests will be better safeguarded. So long as we are divided into communities, looking suspiciously on each other, and the Government has to be responsible for making these appointments, we shall do so after taking into consideration all these relevant factors. We shall continue our present policy whatever criticisms are levelled against it."

Undoubtedly this is the sanest course to be followed, and every right-thinking patriot should support the policy of the present Government laid down by the Prime Minister in this behalf. But the extremist Muslims continue to fret and fume. They feel that as many Muslims are not taken into

Government services as they had expected. An increasingly large number of young men belonging to the community are coming out every year from the high schools and the colleges. The days have long passed when there was a paucity of educated Muslims in the country. Nor has, in spite of the best efforts of the Government, the proportion of Hindus employed in the State suddenly and strikingly gone very much down. The Muslims are impatient and sometimes make astounding proposals that in certain departments the recruitment of non-Muslim communities should be stopped, or non-Muslim employees above a certain age should be prematurely retired. They forget that, as was observed by the Glancy Commission, "it is obviously impossible to revolutionise the State machinery all at once."

The problem of adequate representation in Government services is still a live problem. It is being vastly discussed on the public platform, in the press and inside the legislature. At times appointment of an individual on a certain post raises such a heated controversy that the entire atmosphere of the country is vitiated. Whole pages of the newspapers are devoted to these topics. Entire political organisations are commandeered to play the game. The Muslim Conference, the then biggest political party of the State, devoted the major portion of its existence in challenging the Government rightly to interpret and promptly to carry out the recommendations of the Glancy Commission in this particular behalf.

Kashmir politics at present is solely the concern

of the educated middle classes. They are vocal; they are vociferous. It suits them to demand their own rights and express their own grievances in the name of the masses. The masses never joined the Kashmir movement except for a brief period in 1931 when they were hypnotised by religious slogans and sentiments, and when they had great hopes that something might be done to ameliorate their distressing economic lot. Realising by experience that the middle and upper classes were selfish, they abandoned them long ago. The fight for loaves and fishes of office is, therefore, entirely conducted by the educated middle classes. The Hindus have a large share in public services, and the Muslims want to obtain their legitimate part of it—that is the present political movement of Kashmir. The country as a whole and the masses especially have nothing to do with it.

But from this it must not be inferred, as the communal Hindu politicians and the publicists would make us believe, that this struggle is not a part of that big revolutionary fight which sooner or later the mass of people living in this country are bound to start without consideration of caste or creed against the extant social and political order. The problem of employment in State services will continue to attract attention so long as all communities are not adequately represented in them, but it will wane in importance with the passage of time; and as soon as the middle classes of the Muslims obtain their due share, a great hurdle in the path of the freedom movement will have been removed.

Hindu-Muslim unity will then become a practical possibility and the stage will be fully set for great democratic changes in the counitry. There are some shrewd observers, however, who with great far-sightedness, force and sincerity say that once the communal advantages are entrenched in the State Service, it is difficult to dislodge the upper and the middle classes either from the positions they have gained or from the vicious mentality they have formed. Perhaps they are right. But it must be observed that the unity that will come after the Muslim middle classes have obtained their due share of services will not be the unity of pacts between communities or the chosen representatives from their middle classes. It will be a unity brought about by the force of fundamental social and economic facts, in spite of the middle classes who, their representation secured, can no longer set up misleading slogans of " non-Muslim stranglehold on Government Services." It is from this point of view that the present uneven development of different communities and under-representation of some of them in public services are great stumbling blocks in the way of our progress. Obviously, the Hindus can play an important role in setting matters in order if they are patriotic and generous enough to do so. But, believe it or not, some of them claiming to spread nationalistic ideas in the country do so to shelve the recommendations of the Glancy Commission about employment in the State Services!

# CHAPTER IX

## Kashmir To-day

What is the condition of the people of Kashmir to-day? A volume by itself can be written on this subject, and it is rather difficult task to compress the whole information about it in a single chapter like this. The constitutional advance that the people have been granted and the freedom in expressing their opinion either in the press or on the platform, as also the civil liberty that they are allowed, I shall discuss separately in two chapters below. In this chapter I propose to mention the more important facts and figures to convey an idea of the prevailing conditions in the State.

The total population of Kashmir State according to the census of 1931 is 36,46,243.* This may be divided according to religions as follows :—

Muslims=28,17,636, Hindus=7,36,222, Sikhs=50,662, Buddhists=38,724, Christians=2,263, Jains=597, others=139.

---

*According to the census of 1941, the total population is 40,21,658. Details of this census are not available at the time of writing this book.

The population of Jammu Province is 17,88,441. (Mohammedans=10,91,021, Hindus=6,68,138, Sikhs =29,282), that of the Kashmir Province 15,69,218 (Hindus=69,296, Mohammedans=14,78,287, Sikhs= 21,190) and that of the Frontier Illaqas 2,88,584 (Hindus=1,680, Mohammedans=2,48,328, Buddhists =38,212).*

According to the latest official figures the revenue of the State is Rs. 2,77,18,000. The following are the principal heads from which it is derived :—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Land Revenue | ... | Rs. 64,32,000 |
| 2. | Customs | ... | Rs. 62,26,000 |
| 3. | Forests | ... | Rs. 60,07,000 |
| 4. | Excise | ... | Rs. 3,32,000 |
| 5. | Grazing Fees | ... | Rs. 5,49,000 |
| 6. | Stamps | .. | Rs. 6,53,000 |
| 7. | Income Tax | ... | Rs. 2,88,000 |
| 8. | Property in British India | ... | Rs. 98,000 |
| 9. | Interest | ... | Rs. 3,44,000 |
| 10. | Administration of Justice | ... | Rs. 1,83,000 |
| 11. | Jails | ... | Rs. 61,000 |
| 12. | Police | ... | Rs. 37,000 |
| 13. | Minor Departments | ... | Rs. 78,000 |
| 14. | Education | ... | Rs. 72,000 |
| 15. | Medical | ... | Rs. 5,000 |
| 16. | Industrial Administration | ... | Rs. 37,000 |
| 17. | Agriculture, Horticulture, Veterinary, *Panchayat* and Rural Uplift | ... | Rs. 67,000 |
| 18. | Roads and Buildings | ... | Rs. 13,64,000 |
| 19. | Sericulture | ... | Rs. 23,50,000 |
| 20. | Electrical Department | ... | Rs. 5,33,000 |

*I have not given the population of those followig other religions being insignificant.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 21. | Telegrams and Telephones | Rs. | 1,02,000 |
| 22. | Irrigation ... | Rs. | 5,73,000 |
| 23. | Railways ... | Rs. | 75,000 |
| 24. | Army ... | Rs. | 1,25,000 |
| 25. | Stationery and Printing ... | Rs. | 1,45,000 |
| 26. | Miscellaneous ... | Rs. | 1,99,000 |
| 27. | Industrial Schemes ... | Rs. | 8,20,000 |

It will be seen that items 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17, 18 and 22 are recovered directly as taxes, rents, revenue, fees and fines from the people; while on close examination of details, a small portion of other items also consists of taxes collected from them in one shape or another. It will also be seen that barring income tax (item 7) which falls on people who have larger incomes, the revenue mainly comes from the poorer classes. There would be nothing objectionable in this if this amount or the main part of it were spent on the betterment of those from whom it is realised. But the tale of expenditure is a very disappointing one.

The first charge on these revenues is the expenditure on the Army. Ordinarily it is about Rs. 50,00,000 but owing to the present European War it has gone up to Rs. 62,23,000. One of the Prime Ministers of a European country once seriously proposed, while submitting his budget to the Parliament a couple of years back, that the Government need not keep any defence forces as they had not sufficient funds to run the armament race, and that it was impossible to keep pace with advanced neighbours in this direction. To keep an insufficient army meant nothing and was absurd in the modern

international conditions. This country, it may be mentioned, was spending crores of rupees annually on its armaments and the army. The wise Prime Minister suggested that this amount might be spent on industrialisation and other nation-building works that would materially benefit the people. But Kashmir must have its army. Perhaps the authorities are helpless as British Imperialism would not allow the State to remain without its defence force. But the Dogras also have to maintain their imperialism. They have to keep non-Dogras under subjugation. They do not trust them and must keep them down with the threat of an army. The maintenance of the army also guarantees lucrative posts and a vast field for the Dogra young men in general and the fortunate Rajputs in particular. The Kashmiri who pays his part of the expenditure is banned; he cannot enter the military and share these spoils.

Next in importance to the Defence Budget is the privy purse and the expenditure on the Departments maintained for His Highness. It is rather difficult to estimate the actual amount spent out of the revenue in this behalf; as it is a reserved subject and cannot be discussed on the floor of the Assembly. No details are given about a major part of it in the budget and some of the items that are actually spent for His Highness and the ruling family are so mixed up with other items that it is not possible to find out the exact figures. His Highness can, for instance, import goods into the State territories without paying any customs duty on the same. At the time of

importation the duty is charged and included as revenue but is refunded subsequently. In the Budget this amount is shown as Rs. 3,10,000 for 1996-97 and Rs. 1,50,000 for 1997-98. But this includes other, though minor, refunds as well. Similarly some other items of doubtful nature have to be left out.

Recently the civil list of the Maharaja has been fixed and brought down to "reasonable" proportions. He now gets only 5 per cent of the revenue. The Administration Report of the Government says, "His Highness' Civil List has always been separate from the Civil Budget of the Government, and in the current year's Budget the Civil List is calculated at 5 per cent of the revenue, net figures only being taken for Commercial Departments." It comes to Rs. 13,50,000.

As I said above, Maharaja Hari Singh is the son of Raja Amar Singh, brother of the late Maharaja Partap Singh. Raja Amar Singh had been granted a considerable part of the State territories as his *jagirs*, the revenue of which, according to the backward political conditions then present, was considered by him as his private income. When the present His Highness ascended the *gaddi* he continued to enjoy the income of these *jagirs* which amounted to several lakhs. It appeared objectionable to the British Government after some time that a Ruler of a State should keep a part of his dominions as his private *jagirs*. They advised him to amalgamate the *jagirs* with the State. This His Highness was pleased to do after he was allowed to get adequate compensation. It will be seen that these *jagirs* were not

held by Raja Amar Singh by any treaty, *sanad* or *patta* from the British Government or any other Government which existed before 1846. They were created and granted by the Dogra Government. Now His Highness receives only Rs. 8,50,000 annually as compensation for the *jagirs* in addition to the 5% of the revenue just mentioned.

There are various members of the ruling family such as the Dowager Maharanis, Maharani and the Heir-apparent. The allowances granted to them annually aggregate Rs. 4,38,000.

And lastly, the amount spent on the State Departments which exist for His Highness and the Ruling Family: ordinarily it is about Rs. 13,00,000 but the Maharaja may under special circumstances and if he so desire, spend any amount. The Finance Minister is then informed and he must arrange the funds. These Departments are called Military Secretary's Departments and their detailed Budget Estimates are printed though not supplied to the Assembly, for whom it is a reserved subject. It would be interesting to discuss these details, but I am afraid it will occupy unwarranted space. The total amount that His Highness and his family appropriate out of the revenues of the State is thus about Rs. 41,00,000, which is roughly speaking 16 per cent of the total income. It is significant to compare the figures of the present Civil List with those that obtained at the time of the late Maharaja's death. We know that Maharaja Partap Singh was drawing Rs. 30,000 per month in the beginning of his reign when the Government of India objected to

his "squandering wealth on personal expense." During the whole course of his life he never appropriated for himself more than Rs. 1,00,000 per month. The total amount fixed as privy purse was about 18 lakhs. In fairness let me put down that at the time of his death the revenue of the State was only Rs. 2,17,50,000. It must, however, be noted that the major portion of the privy purse of Maharaja Partap Singh used to be spent in the State, while the same is not true of the fabulous amount of Rs. 41,00,000 now reserved as Civil List. One may admire His Highness for having curtailed his expenditure recently, but one would yet like to know what good parents spent such huge portions of the family income on themselves, while the children move about famished and naked? I leave it now to the reader to form his own opinion about the statement that His Highness is drawing only 5 per cent of Revenue made in the Administration Report of the Kashmir Government.

Next in importance comes the expenditure on the Administration of the Government. A very large amount which has been differently calculated by different authorities is spent on it. Some have even gone to the extent of asserting that more than a crore of rupees is spent annually on the administration of the different departments of the State. This opinion may be an extreme one, but it is undeniable that top-heaviness has become an incurable disease of the Kashmir Administration. Time and again political parties, both moderate and extremist, have complained of this, but to no purpose. The

disease has become only more deep-rooted with the passage of time. Salaries, especially of the higher officials, have always shown a tendency towards rise, and new posts are being created every now and then by the officials of the State to provide for their favoured ones. If figures of the present-day expenditure are compared with those of twenty years ago, the difference is remarkable.

The Prime Minister of Kashmir gets Rs. 4,000/- per month; the other four Ministers receive Rs. 2,500/- per month each. Many Heads of Departments get Rs. 1,500/- per month each and the Provincial Heads Rs. 1,000/- per month each. There is a battalion of Secretaries, Deputy Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries to the Government whose pays range from Rs. 200/- to Rs. 600/- per month each. They are under a Chief Secretary who gets Rs. 1,500/- per month. Officers have got Assistants and Personal Assistants, and in all fairness the pay of an official should be counted as not only what he gets; but there should be added to it what his Personal Assistant gets. In this way a large amount of money, far more than a poor country like Kashmir can afford to pay on its administration, is spent on these fat-salaried officers. All the Ministers with the exception of one are non-State subjects. So are most of the Heads of Departments. The Directors of Medical Services, Education, Industries; the Chief Conservator of Forests; the Inspectors-General of Police and Customs; the Chief Engineers of Public Works and Electrical Departments; and the Accountant-General, none of whom gets less than Rs. 1,500/- per month,

are non-State Subjects. Not that qualified sons of the soil are not available; but these are prize posts and are in the gift of the Head of the Government. In order that the reader may be able to form a correct opinion about these salaries, I would draw his attention to the following*:

"Hitler takes no salary from the State: rather he donates it to a fund which supports workmen who have suffered from labour accidents.

"Mussolini's official salary is 8,000 lire per month (about £135)."

"Mr. de Valera reduced his salary from £2,500 to £1,500 a year on taking office. He has no private means; no expensive hobbies."

"Stalin's salary is about 1,000 roubles per month, the equivalent of which in Russia in 1939 was about £40/-. He is completely uninterested in money."

There is no country in Europe which is so small in size and population and so undeveloped and backward as Kashmir, and we cannot therefore appropriately compare the salaries of the officials of our country with officials of any European State. We may, however, convey to the reader an idea of the top-heavy Administration of Kashmir by saying that in Bulgaria, which is a Monarchy and not a Socialist Government, "a Cabinet Minister gets £40/- a month; the Rector of Sofia gets £17/- and an ordinary Professor £16. Judges range from £26/- to £10/- a month; a General gets £15/-, a High School teacher

---

**Inside Europe* by John Gunther, pages 8, 244, 368 and 537.

£7 a month, and there is no baksheesh—bribery—in Bulgaria."*

Very little is thus left for the nation-building and beneficent departments out of the total revenues of the State after these big slices are cut off for the Defence, the Civil List and the Administration. What, in fact, is spent on the people out of the whole revenue is as follows:—

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Medical | ... | Rs. 9,33,000 |
| 2. | Education | ... | Rs. 24,66,000 |
| 3. | Agriculture | ... | Rs. 1,48,000 |
| 4. | Veterinary | ... | Rs. 1,59,000 |
| 5. | Co-operative Department | ... | Rs. 1,32,000 |
| 6. | *Panchayats* | ... | Rs. 2,15,000 |
| 7. | Industries | ... | Rs. 1,37,000 |
| 8. | Roads and Buildings | ... | Rs. 17,32,000 |
| 9. | Irrigation | ... | Rs. 2,08,000 |

This totals Rs. 61,20,000 out of a total revenue of Rs. 2,77,00,000.

Besides, there are three Commercial Departments which may be said to benefit the public in one way or another. They are: (1) Sericulture—Rs. 13,43,000, (2) Electrical Department—Rs. 2,86,000 and (3) Telegraphs—Rs. 1,70,000. At its proper place I shall show how little of this amount is really spent on the poor masses living in the countryside.

Kashmir is an agricultural country. Ninety per cent of the population live in the villages and earn their livelihood by tilling the soil. The total area of the whole State is more than 84 thousand square

**Inside Europe*, page 475.

miles, but most of it is not fit for cultivation and is comprised of barren mountainous tracts. Especially is this the case in the Frontier *Illaqas*. The total area of land as measured by the Settlement Department including the area under forests, is 49·89 lakhs of acres in Jammu, 17·78 in Kashmir, and only 2·68 in the Frontier. Out of this the cultivated area is only 11·32 lakhs of acres in Jammu, 9·49 in Kashmir, and 0·77 in Frontier. And this land is not in the hands of the tillers of the soil. A large part of it is occupied by the city dwellers, absentee landlords, and others who employ labour either temporarily or permanently as tenants-at-will. So the fruits of the soil and the produce of the land do not solely go to the tiller, but are in part shared by the landlord. As a result of the Glancy Recommendations the Proprietary rights of land were granted to the people of Kashmir in 1933. But no effective land alienation law was simultaneously promulgated to save the class of peasant proprietors from falling a prey to the greedy and rapacious capitalist class, with the result that the lands are being alienated rapidly. In one year the lands alienated by gifts, mortgages and sales aggregated to 46,673 and 12,643, acres in Jammu and Kashmir Provinces respectively. Had there been not a ban forbidding sale of more than 25 per cent of the total land of each individual holder, the results would have been much more disastrous. Still it is feared that already a large portion has been alienated by the poorer class of peasantry in order to pay off their debts of the rents and taxes of the Government from year to year. This has naturally aggravated the agrarian problem

of the State. There is a great pressure on land, and the tillers of the soil have become economically poorer than they were before 1931.

Then there are *jagirs*. Out of the total land revenue more than 12 per cent is assigned for *muafis* and *jagirs*. An area of 2,91,689 acres in Kashmir, 3,62,276 in Jammu and 46,145 in Frontier is assigned. Out of this 48,303 acres in Kashmir, 78,056 in Jammu and 4,553 in Frontier are under the hereditary *jagirdars* in perpetuity and the remainder has been assigned for lifetime or during the pleasure of the Government to persons for their loyal services.

Two *jagirdars*, both Rajputs, enjoy some autonomy in their *illaqas*. One is the Raja of Poonch and the other that of Chenani. They are like States within the State. They maintain their own administrations—the worse for their people as they are burdened with still heavier taxes. Poonch is a big *jagir*, bigger than many Indian States. Its area is 1,627 square miles; population 4,21,939;* and its annual revenue Rs. 9,84,357. The Raja of Poonch used to appropriate as much as 40 per cent of the revenue of the *jagir*. His Vizier receives Rs. 1,200/- per month as his pay. Recently the Raja died and has left behind a minor, which has necessitated the appointment of an Administrator on a monthly salary of Rs. 2,500/- per month. The whole system of Poonch administration is rotten and scandalous. There is hardly any justice, and people are at the mercy of the officials. The Government was under the dual control of the Raja and the Maharaja, who

*This is according to the census of 1941.

were unhappily at loggerheads with each other, and the people suffered. Some of the public workers of the *jagir* demand that Poonch should be taken under their direct supervision by the Government of India and the control of Maharaja and his Government should be withdrawn. It is highly doubtful whether the finances of the *jagir* can allow the fulfilment of this desire.

Chenani is a tiny *jagir* totally unfit to run its own administration, as after defraying the big share of the Raja from the revenue little is left for the pay of the officials. A school and a dispensary are desiderata in the *jagir*.

*Jagirdars* used to collect their revenue in kind till 1930. This system had given birth to many abuses. A hue and cry was raised everywhere in the *jagirs* against the system. Curiously enough a Committee comprising only of the *jagirdars* and not the representatives of the people of the *jagirs* was formed to inquire into the matter and make recommendations to the Government to put matters right. Look at the supreme sacrifice of the *jagirdars!* They agreed to collect the revenue in cash, but on the condition that they should be granted more *jagirs* to compensate them for the loss that they would sustain by the change. His Highness admired this self-abnegation on the part of the *jagirdars* and most of the Khalsa land, which ought to have gone to the peasants, was handed over to the *jagirdars!* What was highly objectionable in this connection was that large tracts of fertile land in Kashmir were granted as fresh *jagirs* to some Rajputs of Jammu.

I shuddered when I heard the condition of the people living in the *jagirs.* The depredations of the *jagirdars* are monstrous. There is no law but the will of the *jagirdars* in these parts of the State. I was told that people may not marry even their daughters against the wishes of the *jagirdars.* If the country is to progress, these *jagirs* one and all should be abolished root and branch.

People of the State have to pay many direct and indirect taxes. Some of them are really obnoxious. Customs duty is one of them. In many cases the duty levied is more than 50 per cent of the actual cost of the goods. Nothing, except books, has escaped the greedy eye of the authorities and all merchandise when it comes into the State territories or goes out is subjected to duty. This hampers brisk trade and creates heart-burning. Imagine the same article being sold at less than 25 or 30 per cent of its price a little beyond the boundaries of the State and our fellow-countrymen, who have not good fortune to belong to the State, enjoying it at that price. No one voluntarily or willingly pays this duty, and as long as one can by any means escape its payment he does not hesitate to resort to it. Here again poor people are easily and unavoidably caught for disobedience of law and punished, while the Government officials and influential people go scotfree. I have seen big officials and the Secretaries of the Government passing the Customs posts with cart-loads of goods without paying a single penny. Their courteous smiles do the job. On the other hand, perhaps at the very moment, a poor Kashmiri pea-

sant is hauled up, searched from head to foot, humiliated and subjected to all kinds of indignities and made to pay duty on a few rupees worth of goods bought with the money he earned by labour during several months of the winter outside the State. A resolution was carried in the Assembly and accepted by the Government that the goods of these labourers valuing up to Rs. 25 should be exempted from the duty. The orders were passed and the conditions have improved, though very slowly. And why have the customs duties become necessary? Certainly, as shown above, not for the welfare and the progress of the country and its people, not for the nation-building activities of the State, but for the most top-heavy administration in the world.

I have noted the decline of the Kashmir industries in the chapter " Early Dogra Rule." They did not revive but went on declining till the year 1928, when in the summer of that year the All-India Spinners' Association turned their attention towards it. Kashmir deals in commodities, chief among them being Woodwork, Woollens and Fruits. Forests are the monopoly of the Government. The Spinners' Association revived the woollen industry and organised it. Happily no intention of exploitation was behind the back of this move and the industry made rapid progress within a few years' period. Below I give figures showing the work that the Association has done during the last twelve

years :—

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Total production from 1928 to March 1941 | ... ... | Rs. 21,28,605 |
| Wages distributed | ... ... | Rs. 17,83,749 |
| Number of villages in which work was done | ... .. | 138 |
| Salary paid | ... .. | Rs. 1,14,763 |

The Kashmir Shawl Industry has seen resurrection. Thanks to Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Movement which has brought in its wake a demand for *swadeshi* goods, other woollen products such as Gabbas, Namdas and Pattoos are also being sold in larger quantities. During this long period Kashmir Government looked with disfavour upon the activities of the Association, partly because of strained relations between the Congress and the British Government in the early thirties, and partly their own prejudice. Last year, however, a loan of Rs. 1,00,000, not without a small interest of 2 per cent, has been granted to the concern. It is evident that if the Association had not come to the rescue of the Kashmir artisan, the industry would have been long since extinct from the land of its birth.

In this connection I should like to mention that it was at the fall of the cottage industries in the reign of Dogras that the peasants from the countryside, finding themselves quite idle during the winter months and forced by the economic necessity, began to make seasonal exodus to the plains. The facilities of communications have been an encouragement in this respect. During famines in Pathan and Sikh times, and of course much earlier too, Kashmiris,

including Muslims, came away from Kashmir and settled in the Punjab, notably at Rawalpindi, Sialkot and Amritsar and even Ludhiana and Jullundur. But the exodus was never so regularly seasonal as now. At the beginning of the present century this had become a regular practice, and now about a lakh—no exact figures are available though—of these labourers are making a move towards the plains at the first approach of winter. Some of them go as far as Calcutta and work as wage-earners. They do not receive human treatment everywhere. The Kashmir Government never cared to know anything about them but interests itself only in demanding from them their hard earned pennies by way of Customs duty, rent, tax, revenue and cess.

The total imports of merchandise for one year 1995-96 (latest figures available) were valued at Rs. 2,46,35,104, while the value of the total exports for the same year was Rs. 1,67,43,785. This is enough to show what a big drain there is on the resources of the country impoverishing its people day by day. The chief articles of import are cotton manufacture and tea, valued at Rs. 68,18,536 and Rs. 30,46,421 respectively. Strange as it may seem, wool, woollens, oils, vegetables and fruits (of which Kashmir could be the biggest supplier) are also imported in no small quantity. For the year 1995-96 woollens were imported for Rs. 9,60,423, oils for Rs. 17,14,640. and fruits and vegetables for Rs. 3,91,264 !

There is nothing surprising in the backwardness of the State in the sphere of Industries aud Com-

merce. The Government believe that it is none of their duty to improve matters. It is interesting to read what they say in their Administration Report:

> "Although the bank rate was fairly low throughout the year under report and the general conditions of Industrial finance were easier than usual, there was a peculiar hesitation on the part of the people of the State to come forward with constructive schemes of industrialisation."*

So it is the people who must come forward with the schemes! The Government on their part are prepared to collect taxes and revenue! "The promotion of industries should receive the earnest attention of the State authorities......Industrial Developments are at the present time of the utmost importance, as it is highly desirable to provide an outlet for unemployment," recommended the Glancy Commission in 1932. After a period of more than 8 years the Government responsible for carrying out the recommendations complains that the people do not come forward with constructive schemes of industrialisation!

Out of the total population of 36,46,243 only 1,23,885, *i.e.*, 3·4 per cent or 34 out of a thousand are literate according to the census figures of 1931. Only 9,078 women are literate, that is 5 per thousand.† The Government spends Rs. 24,66,000 or hardly 9 per cent on the education of the whole mass of people. This is not even half of what is expended on the Military and is less than what is spent on the

*Administration Report, page 147.

†According to the census of 1941 the percentage of literates is 6·6. The number of women literates is 42,151.

Ruling Family. Let us now find out in what manner this amount is spent.

There are 8420 villages and 38 towns in the whole State. The total population of the males is 17,39,720. There are two arts colleges, 129 secondary schools and 943 primary schools conducted by the State for them. One must visit some of these primary schools to know how literacy is imparted to children. Most of these institutions have a single teacher who is made to work as teacher, chowkidar, and peon in one. He gets the shockingly low salary of Rs. 20 or so per month. The children of all the five classes are huddled together in one room, and the teacher is hardly able to keep them silent. But he has to show progress, and he does show it on paper. Most of the boys leave the school before they complete their full course, and those whose parents have the patience to keep them on come out with the "diploma" only to lapse to illiteracy again after a few years. More than 50 per cent of the scholars whom the Government mentions as literate sons of the soil in their records are thus really no less ignorant of education than are their fellow-countrymen who never visited any school. The whole system of primary education needs a drastic change, and if the Government were not running after shadows rather than realities, this waste of money and energy should have stopped.

As regards secondary education, it is confined to the cities and the towns. Poor villagers can derive little advantage from it. There are no good boarding houses provided with these secondary

schools. However desirous village boys might be to prosecute their studies, they have to deny themselves that privilege for want of facilities to live in a town for the period. " How many a gem of purest ray serene ", thus be embedded in the obscurity of a distant village, do not shine as they could if they found opportunities to do so. Day in and day out applications are sent by the villagers from all parts of the State to the Director, telegrams to the Education Minister, and complaints to the press that they want secondary schools at their places, but the usual reply given by the authorities is that there are no funds for the purpose.

The condition of higher education is still worse. There is only one arts college in Srinagar, a city with a population of 1,77,459. This college can hardly accommodate 500 students. Imagine what its condition must be when there are more than 1,500 students on its rolls. This is the only arts college in the Provinces of Kashmir and Frontier as the Prince of Wales College is the only one in the Jammu Province. It may, however, be mentioned that the Jammu college is better in respect of accommodation, grounds, and the proportion of staff to students.

The population of women is 15,19,139. There is no college for them and there are three girls high schools in the whole State. There are 40 girl middle schools and 173 primary schools. Only 15,942 scholars are at school.

And lastly about Technical Education. There are 8 technical schools in the whole State, in which

357 students in all are receiving training in different arts and crafts. Comment is unnecessary.

Following the Congress Governments in British India, the Kashmir Government has introduced an educational system based on the Wardha Scheme of education. Efforts are also being made to spread Adult Education in the country. This experiment has been going on for the last two years with no tangible results. It is believed in certain quarters that this was done to silence the criticism in nationalist circles outside the State against the reactionary methods of the Government in dealing with the Political movement. That may or may not be correct, but this much appears true that a system of education which has been designed to be run under a responsible form of Government cannot possibly work in a country where the machinery of administration is ante-diluvian and inelastic. It must, however, be recognised that the attempt is a laudable one and all impartial and unprejudiced people would wait to know the results.*

---

* Speaking about the introduction of Basic Education in Kashmir Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote recently :—

"While Kashmir appeared so static and unchanging one change pleased me greatly. This was the introduction of Basic Education in the State Schools. I visited some of these schools and saw the happy children with bright and intelligent faces at work and at play. It is for this generation that we struggle and build and it is well that some at least among them are learning rightly the business of life, and developing in their early years, an integrated personality, adaptable minds and hands. I hope that Basic Education will spread throughout Kashmir and bring into its fold every little boy and girl."

The story of medical aid rendered by the Government is a painful reading. With the introduction of allopathic system of medicine, the indigenous schools of *vaids* and *hakims* have almost ended. These easily available and cheap native physicians were the custodians of the nation's health. The Government never helped, encouraged or supervised their work, with the result that gradually their ranks thinned, and now there are innumerable villages where there are no *hakims* and *vaids*. On the other hand, the Government's own system is incomplete, as it is not prepared to spend as much as is necessary for its proper upkeep and maintenance. There are only two big hospitals in the two premier cities of the State. Even as they are, these hospitals cannot claim to have an up-to-date arrangement for patients in every respect. Among his Raj Tilak boons the Maharaja announced in 1925 the intention of building first class up-to-date hospitals in Srinagar and Jammu for the treatment of patients of all classes. The work of building these hospitals was begun only last year—sixteen long years after.

There are 95 Government dispensaries in the whole State. They are mostly located in the towns. On an average one dispensary serves an area of 834 square miles and a population of 38,358 persons. The chief item of expenditure in the budget of the dispensary is the pay of the doctor and his compounder who are of little use to the large area as a whole as they cannot be expected to visit the patients far in the countryside. The quantity of the medicines

and drugs kept at the dispensaries is so ridiculously small that it is nearly exhausted during the first two or three months of the year. Besides, the medicines are from the very outset reserved for and distributed among the Government officers and influential people by the doctors and other subordinates of the department. It is not surprising that there is absolute lack of faith among the masses in the efficiency of allopathic treatment in these circumstances.

There are two Zenana Hospitals in the Jammu Province and only one in the Kashmir Province, and none in the Frontier districts.

There is an appalling waste of human life for want of medical aid. A large number of women die owing to labour pain, child-birth and other preventable diseases. If proper medical assistance were forthcoming, this would not be the case. Recently, the Government has, under pressure of public opinion, begun to revive the old system of *vaids* and *hakims* by giving them some stipends. But the aid given is very meagre—only about Rs. 25,000 a year.

There are no good roads connecting villages with one another. There are only 990 miles (512 metalled) of motorable roads in the whole State, which include the two largest hill roads of Banihal and Jhelum valley. Roads may sometimes be constructed not for the utility of the public but for the convenience of some august personages.

As if the taxes, rents and revenues were not enough to break the backbone of the masses, the officialdom is corrupt, and there is hardly any

department of the Government where greasing of the palm is not necessary before any work can be got done. The payments of bribes have become so regular and methodical that it does not take long for a man in the villages to learn the "rates" for different officials at different times. In this year of grace 1941 the masses of Kashmir believe that bribes are not illegal, but among the officials' rights! It is not that low-paid petty officials alone are the criminals in this respect; even high officials drawing fat salaries are known to be in the habit of extorting money. A Commission of Enquiry was appointed by the Government under the presidentship of the Chief Justice to make enquiries into the matter. For two years the Commission groped in the dark, hearing evidence from persons most of whom had only sentimental sympathies with the peasants, but could not know much about the ferocious ways and inhuman methods by which the bribes were extorted. When, after all, the Commission did make certain recommendations last year to weed out the corrupt officials, the Government turned down most of them. That was the only way a bureaucracy could deal with the business. It believes in lifeless papers and not in living beings. The papers that come to the Government never admit that any official is corrupt. The charge of bribery is only punishable when it is proved. Not five out of a thousand cases do reach the law courts, and those that reach them at all are dismissed for want of satisfactory evidence. Of course the Presiding Officer of a court can never be so indecent as to

believe the word of a poor peasant against a civilised colleague of another department. Perhaps he knows from personal experience that to err is human. If bribery is to be weeded out, the one thing that the Government can do is to issue strict orders that official papers must be speedily disposed of. Deterrent punishments should be inflicted for any disobedience of these orders.

A soulless bureaucracy sucks the blood of the masses. But there is one hope of redemption for the people of an Indian State—the personality of the Prince. The personal touch of the Maharaja with the people and sometimes dramatic action taken to relieve a poor man of his miseries or from the hands of a merciless official, would not allow the Government machinery to become so dull and unsympathetic. It is said of Gulab Singh that he had some qualities which mitigated the effects of his administration.

"He was always accessible and was patient and ready to listen to complaints. He was much given to looking into details so that the smallest thing might be brought before him and have his consideration. With the customary offering of a rupee as a *nazar* any one could get his ear; even in a crowd one could catch his eye by holding out a rupee and crying out "*Maharaj-Arz Hai*" that is, Maharaj, a petition! He would pounce down like a hawk on the money and having appropriated it would patiently hear out the petitioner. Once a man after this fashion making a complaint, when the Maharaja was taking the rupee, closed his hand on it and said, "No, first hear what I have to say." Even this did not go beyond Gulab Singh's patience; he waited till the fellow had told his tale and opened his hand; then taking the money he gave orders about the case."*

* *Territories of Jammu and Kashmir*, Page 14.

Accessibility could go no further. From his personal observations Frederic Drew wrote the following about Maharaja Ranbir Singh: it is interesting; it is graphic:

"It is when the Maharaja is sitting in the public Durbar, holding open court for the hearing of petitions, that the Mandi has its liveliest appearance. For the morning Durbar he will take his seat, at nine or ten o'olock, beneath one of the arches of the arcade, on the cushion which here serves for the throne, accompanied by his eldest son, and surrounded by his Ministers. and with, maybe, from fifty to a hundred other courtiers and attendants seated round against the wall, at distance according to their degree.

Thus seated, then, and supported, the Maharaja looks out down on the petitioners who stand in the square, which is some feet lower than the room, each coming in succession, according as their petitions, previously written on stamped paper and given in, are called on, stands in front with hands closed, in the attitude of supplication, while the prayer is read out.

The subjects of the petitions are wonderfully varied; perhaps an employee will ask leave to return to his home, or to take his mother's ashes to the Ganges; next, maybe, a criminal is brought to receive final sentence; then a poor woman, with face veiled, will come to complain of some grievance or other; or a dispute about a broken contract of marriage will have to be decided. These are all listened to patiently enough, and on the simpler cases the decision is given at once and written on the petition. The civil and criminal cases have usually been previously inquired into by judicial officers, in the courts of first instance and perhaps have even been adjudicated on by the Appeal Court of Jammu or of Srinagar, but it is open to suitors and complainants to try their fortune with the Maharaja himself. The Maharaja does his best to get at the truth; will examine and sharply cross-examine the witnesses. It frequently ends in his referring the matter to the magistrate for investigation;

**in which case it will be again brought before him for final decision." ***

Maharaja Partap Singh maintained these traditions. He took keen interest in the affairs of his people whether they were of a public or private nature. Being deeply religious, he was wont to haunt the abodes of *fakirs* and sadhus, no matter to what faith they belonged. And here he came in contact with all sorts of people as he always and frequently made surprise visits to these places. He was accessible in his *Durbar*, and, like his father, would allow anyone to make any complaint to him when his officials were present. He had a retentive and keen memory, and it is said that he knew and remembered in every detail thousands of people and their relations with one another. No one worth knowing in his territories was unknown to him. When his officials failed to conciliate some influential party or individual, a friendly remark, even though accompanied with an admonition, would end the matter amicably.

But now the less said about it the better. People of Kashmir have to pay the staggering amount of 41 lakhs of rupees to a Maharaja about whom all that they know is what they occasionally read in press and, unhappily, it is nothing more than that he has gone for a week to Bombay to watch his horses taking part in the races. His present Highness is accessible only in the constitutional and bureaucratic way, through petitions and proper channel. This has a remarkable advantage too. Not a single

* Page 26.

case has come to notice where the Maharaja Bahadur's judgment has been influenced by any official, however high placed, or however close to him. This advantage, it is keenly and universally felt, could be combined with personal accessibility to the mutual good of both the ruler and the ruled.

# CHAPTER X

## The Muslims

According to the census of 1931, out of the total population of 36,46,943 in the State, Muslims are 28,17,636. They are spread all over the country. In Kashmir Province they are 14,78,287 out of a total of 15,69,218 ; in the Jammu Province 10,91,021 out of 17,88,441, and in the Frontier Districts of Gilgit and Ladakh they are 2,48,328 out of a total population of 2,88,584. From these figures it will be seen that they form a little over 77 per cent of the total population ; in the Kashmir Province they form an overwhelming majority, as many as 92 per cent, and in the Jammu Province they are 61 per cent. But most of the Muslim publicists, oddly enough, even accepting these figures as correct, insist that they form 80 per cent of the population, and in Kashmir proper they will never admit that their percentage is less than 97 in any way.

Barring a few families who came to the country either with Muslim invaders or as independent adventurers and then settled here permanently, all

the Muslims are converts from Hinduism and are the original indigenous inhabitants of the country. During the Muslim rule for about five centuries, the Hindus of Kashmir had to suffer far greater hardships than the Muslims. The lower classes of Hindus therefore considered it more convenient to embrace Islam and live a less miserable life. In the villages mass conversions took place. The people changed their religion, but could not change their blood. The Muslims belong to the same stock and race of people as do the Hindus. One who misses this point while dealing with Kashmir affairs, misses the essential thing and is apt to draw wrong conclusions about the past and prove a poor prophet for the future. For instance, great surprise has been expressed at the fact that when communal frenzy was at its height in September 1931 and the civil administration had virtually abdicated in favour of the disorderly mob, who were armed with all kinds of crude weapons, not a hair of any Hindu was touched. In the countryside thousands of Pandit families live unmolested though they are surrounded entirely by Muslims and, in certain cases, a solitary Hindu house is situated in a dense Muslim population spreading over an area of many miles. It is on record and has been admitted in a published report by the Sanatana Dharama Young Men's Association, the representative organisation of the Kashmiri Pandits, that on the 13th July many Muslims gave shelter to Hindu men and women at the time when mad frenzy was ruling in the streets and their lives were in great danger of being wantonly taken.

These refugees were treated like friends and brothers and allowed to go when the wave of fanaticism passed away. These good Muslims escorted the women to their homes. This happened not in Srinagar alone but all over the country, and it explains why in spite of the bitter experiences of 1931, Pandits continue to live in the remotest corners of Kashmir. The truth is that change of religion has not largely affected the ties of blood, and the Muslims of Kashmir continue to have an affinity of race with their Hindu compatriots. They are equally descendants of the old Aryans who first settled in the valley in pre-historic days.

Muslims ruled over Kashmir for five centuries. It was not the rule of the Muslims of Kashmir. Had it been so, the history of Kashmir would have been written differently. There would have been no regrets over the past. The rulers were aliens and chiefly interested in their own glory. Unfortunately most of them cared much more for their own happiness than for the welfare of their subjects. A few courtiers and noblemen, mostly Muslims, shared in this luxury and enjoyment. The Muslim masses also suffered and, except during the prosperous days of half a dozen kings, like Zain-ul-Abidin, their economic condition was not enviable.

But the wheel of fortune turned, as turn it must. The Muslim rule ended and the Sikhs came in. They proved no better for the masses than their predecessors. Their rule was, however, short-lived. They were followed by the Dogras. The Dogra rule was established and consolidated under the

fostering care of British Imperialism. It is safe and secure from all external aggressions. The British Government is prepared to help it even against any internal disorder. Speaking generally and from the *bourgeois* point of view, the Dogra rule has been a Hindu Raj. Muslims have not been treated fairly, by which I mean as fairly as the Hindus. Firstly, because, contrary to all professions of treating all classes equally, it must be candidly admitted that Muslims were dealt with harshly in certain respects only because they were Muslims. The law prohibiting cow slaughter, which I shall presently deal with, is there to support this statement. Maharaja Partap Singh abolished a tax which the Muslims had to pay on every marriage ceremony. I have noted the attitude of the Hindu officials who dominated each and every department of the State under the Dogras before 1931. Secondly, Muslims also suffer as most of them belong to the lowest strata of society. The great majority of the masses in the State are Muslim.

In the countryside the Muslim is synonymous with the hewer of wood and drawer of water. All sorts of dirty and menial work is to be done by him. A Hindu is respectable in the eyes of the society, and the Muslim, because he is a Muslim, is looked down upon as belonging to an inferior class. Of course, there are, throughout the country, a good many well-to-do Muslims possessing money, power and influence. But man for man even they can hardly claim equal rank and recognition with the Hindus of the same class.

The Muslims are very backward in education. According to the last census 1·6 per cent of them are literate. The literacy among the males is 2·9 per cent, while among the females it is 1·6 per thousand. In the villages, illiteracy of the Muslim masses is colossal. In hundreds of villages not a single Muslim male or female knows even how to write his or her name or count two dozen sheep. For this shocking illiteracy Muslim *mullahs* must share their part of responsibility. These religious preachers do not like that Muslims should come out of the blind world of ignorance and be able to distinguish between right and wrong. They know that the moment Muslims are educated the days of exploitation by the *mullahs* will end. At present and for centuries in the past these unscrupulous guardians of religion and divinity have been fleecing the masses side by side with the officials of the Government, and they are reluctant to give up this lucrative business. The main blame, however, for this state of backwardness falls on the shoulders of the Dogra rule. The Dogras have held the country for about a century with absolutely no fear of foreign aggression or internal disorder. The record of progress as it is should put any conscientious man in charge of the welfare of four million people to shame. When under pressure of public opinion so late as 1916, Maharaja Partap Singh was forced to invite Mr. Sharp, the Educational Commissioner with the Government of India, who recommended several ways and means to spread education among the Muslim masses, his report was, as said above,

placed in an obscure corner of a forgotten almirah and for a decade nothing could be known about it. Mr. Sharp had recommended an immediate increase in the number of schools so as to provide primary education in all villages with a population of 500 or over. This has not been done even in the year of grace 1941.

The poverty of the Muslim masses is appalling. Dressed in rags which can hardly hide his body and barefooted, a Muslim peasant presents the appearance rather of a starving beggar than of one who fills the coffers of the State. He works laboriously in the field during the six months of the summer to pay the State its revenues and taxes, the officials their *rasum* and the money-lender his interest. Most of them are landless labourers working as serfs of the absentee landlords. They hardly earn, as their share of the produce, enough for more than three months. For the rest they must earn by other means. During the six months they are unemployed and must go outside the boundaries of the State to work as labourers in big towns and cities of British India. Their lot, as such, is no good, and many of them die every year, unknown, unwept and unsung outside their homes. The disgraceful environments and unkind surroundings in which so many of them die have been a slur alike on the people and the Government of the country to which they belong.

Almost the whole brunt of the official corruption has been borne by the Muslim masses. The Police, the Revenue Department, the Forest Officials,

and even the employees of the Co-operative Societies, have their palms oiled by exaction of the usual *rasum*. Nobody feels any sympathy with this distressing picture of poverty. The channels of human kindness and mercy have run dry. To loot the peasant is no sin; society does not disapprove of it.

The list of the earthly possessions of a peasant is very brief. Besides the rags he wears, he owns a small house, a few earthen vessels, a wooden box, a couple of mats and, of coure, a large debt. In most cases they have no bedding to sleep in. During winter, when nights are severely cold in the valley of Kashmir, they sleep on hay spread on the floor in a part of a room occupied by cattle, which is generally warm.

Rural indebtedness is staggering. The Government never took the trouble of making any inquiry in this behalf. Incomplete and haphazard non-official enquiries show that more than seventy per cent of the people living in the villages are under debt. In numerous cases the produce of the land is pawned long before it is visible in the fields. Once a debt has been contracted it is never "fully" paid back. Too ignorant to understand accounts, the Muslim peasants are fleeced by the Hindu *sahukars* and Muslim *Wad-dars* and *Khojas* in ways shocking to fair minds. The debtor goes on paying something every year in cash and kind, and yet the debt of a trifling sum of 30 or 40 rupees is not paid "in full" during a lifetime. Consequently, the father leaves the debt to his son, and in this way the

family remains perpetually under debt. The entire class of peasants are virtual serfs of the money-lenders.

Mention must, however, be thankfully made of a piece of debt legislation called the Agriculturist Relief Regulation. This Regulation was passed when such laws were not fashionable even in British India, not to speak of Indian States; and His present Highness was himself the prime mover of this good piece of legislation. He wanted it and he had it promulgated in an incredibly short time.

There has also been another creditable piece of legislation under which the courts during the time of Mr. B. J. Glancy's tenure of office as Minister in Kashmir, relieved the Kashmir agriculturist debtors of about Rs. 17 lakhs distributed by decree in small instalments of, say, Rs. 30 over a number of years, easing in this way, their burden of debt. All rural debt had to be referred to the special "Shali Benches" within a limited time, after which it was void.

One can go on writing about Kashmir Muslims. The condition of non-Muslim peasantry in the Jammu Province is no better. Perhaps the condition of the Harijans is even worse. Why then have I dealt with this subject under this head? It must be remembered that the population of the Muslims is so overwhelmingly large that whenever one speaks of the masses one thinks of the Muslims. At any rate this is undoubtedly the case in the Kashmir Province. At the mere mention of the Kashmir word *groost*, that is, the peasant, the

picture of the Muslim labourer on the land with his dirty tattered shirt, an apology for trousers, and a worn-out skull cap, presents itself. The vast majority of the Muslims of the State live in the Kashmir Province. We have seen that their percentage in this province is nearly 93. The leaders of the community have been conscious of this fact. The attitude of the Muslim political workers of the Kashmir Province has therefore always proved a determining factor in State politics. In fact important changes have always been initiated by them and started in their own area.

In a country which is so backward and religion-ridden as Kashmir, the Mir Waiz (literally High Preacher) should have been the natural leader of the people. And so he is. In Kashmir the heads of two different families have been claiming this title. The Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid and the Mir Waiz of Khanaqah-i-Mualla. They are rivals and, but for very brief period of about six months in 1931, have always remained irreconcilables. Besides giving religious sermons in different mosques, they have taken interest in the social welfare of the Muslims and their politics. They are running two denominational High Schools on comparatively modern lines. These are the only private institutions of any sort run by public spirited Muslims in Srinagar. But the outlook of the Mir Waizes is circumscribed and limited. Essentially they are upper class men and look upon all public affairs from that point of view. Their sole income is derived from exploiting the religious sentiments of the lower class Muslims.

The role of preachers and guardianship of Islam has well served them in their gentle acts of exploitation. Muslim masses have regarded them as supermen, beings far removed from the ordinary run of mankind. They were almost worshipped like demi-gods and the very clods they walked over were kissed. I have seen ignorant Muslims attending their sermons and weeping bitterly over they knew not what.

Handsome gifts, donations and subscriptions were received by the Mir Waizes from the Muslims who believed that such offerings would lead them direct to heaven after death. It is evident that these conditions could continue only so long as the Muslims remained ignorant and backward. So any movement purporting to revolutionise the mentality of the masses was always vehementally opposed by them. To dub such a movement as anti-Islamic has been their cheap, and for a long time successful, trick. When under changing conditions and pressure of public opinion, they were obliged to start modern schools, no classes for physical sciences were introduced. Such knowledge was considered satanic and unholy for the minds of followers of Islam. True to their class interests, they have fought the Government n the name of the community to get more and more privileges for themselves, but when the masses rose in revolt against the extant social and political order, they became reactionaries and obscurantists and sided with the Government to crush the popular uprising. Both of them signed the memorial which was presented to Lord Reading

in 1924 but both recanted before the official Enquiry Commission.

Not realising the full significance and the implications of the struggle that was coming, both the Mir Waizes joined the mass movement of 1931. For the moment they could not believe that a movement of the Muslims could be possible without them. But soon afterwards when the base of the movement broadened and the leadership passed into the hands of other men they were disillusioned. Old idols were demolished and new gods began to be worshipped by the Muslims, and they felt jealous. They were frightened and believed or were made to believe that the leadership had slipped out of their hands owing to their own folly in having encouraged the mass revolt. They wanted to retrace. The Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid, till then the more popular of the two, was the first to take the reactionary step. Slowly but surely and steadily he went to the Government side and they welcomed him. He and his followers were encouraged in many ways. They were granted immunity from the provisions of any emergency regulations applied against the Muslims. In a notorious case when punitive tax was levied upon the Muslim residents of Maisuma in Srinagar *Usuf Shahi* Mussulmans were exempted. Of course the Mir Waiz would always hotly protest against any remarks of pro-Government leanings ascribed to him. In 1936 he presented on behalf of the public an address of welcome to His Highness on his return from Europe. He was granted a *jagir* by the

Ruler in an open Durbar as a reward. As his last bid for power Usuf Shah tried to raise a storm in June 1937 over a speech of a Hindu leader, alleging that by comparing the cow to the prophet the Hindu leader had been guilty of abusing the Prophet. Defying the orders of the Government he started and headed a procession which became violent. The police fired at the mob and two men were killed and many wounded. Usuf Shah was arrested and released on bail on furnishing a bond promising to behave. He has now lost all his influence and is a spent-up force; but it will not be surprising if with the help of the Government and the reactionary non-Muslim classes he revives his leadrship any day in the future. Short-sightedness of the nationalist Muslim leaders alone can give rise to such an occasion.

But Usuf Shah with his party is a historical force in Kashmir politics. Apparently personal rivalry with the leaders of the Conference Party made him play the part he did. But a deeper meaning lies hidden in all his activities. He represents the anti-revolution and is the mouthpiece of all reaction and obscurantism. It has fallen to his lot to oppose all that the leaders of the Kashmir movement have done to carry the people on their forward march. When the movement was conducted on communal lines, he came forward as the champion of the cause of nationalism, condemned the Conference leaders as Qadianis and worst types of communalists, sided with Ahrars, invited Hindus to join him and started a progressive party known as the Azad Conference.

When nationalism entered the portals of the Muslim Conference and the leaders broad-based the movement, the Mir Waiz became frankly and avowedly communal in outlook, repudiated all his previous slogans and declarations and charged his rivals with having proved traitors to the Muslim community. Significantly enough, on both the occasions, he pressed religion into service to prove the veracity of his assertions.

At present Mir Waiz Usuf Shah is accepted as the destined leader of all the Muslim reactionaries. He failed to send even one of his candidates from any constituency to the State Assembly. But the Government props him up. From time to time persons belonging to his party have been nominated as members of the legislature. Muslims belonging to the upper classes and afraid of the social and the political revolution that the Kashmir movement stands for, have looked to the Mir Waiz for guidance and leadership. At every time of change and crisis, he and his party are bound to side with the Government and crush the Muslim masses in every possible way.

The other Mir Waiz, of Khanqah-i-Mualla, remained with the movement for a longer time, not so much because he did not realise the declining power of his influence as because the old rivalry had revived. The Mir Waiz of the Jama Masjid being in the opposition, this Mir Waiz supported the movement. This support was purchased by the leaders of the movement at a great cost. In order to gratify him, the movement gradually degenerated into a personal

fight between Mir Waiz Usuf Shah on the one side and the leaders of the movement on the other. For four years, more or less, Muslim politics became a battle-field of politicians in which muck-raking and mud-slinging were the chief weapons. But when wise counsels prevailed and better days returned, the non-religious politicians belonging to middle classes refused to play this filthy game any more. From 1935 all activities were directed towards achievement of Responsible Government, Consequently the Mir Waiz of Khanqah-i-Mualla began to look small, and went slowly into the background, dwindling into insignificance. He and his few followers managed to leave the ranks of the fighters. Like his rival he also thenceforth played the role of a reactionary, though in his own way. If the two Mir Waizes ever join hands now, it will be to oppose the forward movement.

The party strife among the Muslims which was at its height in 1933 and continued right into the middle of the year 1935, was unedifying for the leaders of the popular movement. Their attention was wholly absorbed in the factious fights. Vulgar speeches and mean attacks were made by both the parties against each other. The large masses had already left the movement in 1932, but whatever part of them still clung to it, were thoroughly disgusted with this puerile behaviour of the leaders in these personal rivalries and abandoned the ranks. In 1933 the differences became so acute that the Government intervened in order to maintain law and order. On 30th January, 1933, a serious

scuffle took place in the Naqshband Shah's Mosque where many people were injured. The police arrested two men. Efforts were made by the Senior Superintendent of Police to bring the parties to some mutual understanding, and a sort of pact was entered into by the respective leaders to cease hostilities. But it did not halt, and no permanent good relations could be established. On 6th April, the Id day, a terrible fracas took place in the Idgah ground which was followed by skirmishes between the adherents of the two Mir Waizes all over the city. Nothing was left for the Government but to take some drastic action. They asked both the Mir Waizes to furnish bonds of good behaviour under Article 107, Indian Penal Code. Mir Waiz Usuf Shah refused to do so and was arrested on the 27th of April and imprisoned for one year. Subsequently, however, he gave the required undertaking and was released on 3rd May. But again the old process of inflammatory speeches in public meetings against each other was repeated. On 17th May a volunteer of the Muslim Conference Party died of the wounds he had received in a scuffle. His dead body was carried in a big procession to the burial ground, where exciting speeches were delivered. On 31st May the Government arrested four leaders of the Muslim Conference Party, and three of the Mir Waiz Usuf Shah's party. As a result there were disturbances all over the country, but they were easily controlled by the Government. The people had become sick of the dangerous rivalry of the leaders and were unwilling to take any part in these

petty civil wars. In order to prove their love for the community and gain upper hand in politics, both the parties became thoroughly communal in outlook and created a dangerous political atmosphere in Kashmir during 1933 and 1935. Petty problems of communal nature were given great importance. Not infrequently disputes were raised with Hindus over small patches of land. During this period no less than fifty cases of disputed lands became the battle-grounds between the communities, and riots threatened. The rivalry between the Muslim parties lost its fierceness as more and more people began to lose interest in these personal quarrels, till at last it died down by the end of 1935 in its fierce personal form.

But the Muslim Conference Party did not have smooth sailing. Having settled with the Mir Waizes and given both of them a quietus by the end of 1936, they wanted to set their own house in order. The fight that the party was conducting was essentially political and economic ; but the organisation was run on religious and communal basis. It was not therefore surprising that those sections of Muslims who wanted to exploit the Conference for their religious propaganda became disillusioned and disappointed. Such, for instance, were the Ahmadis. Consequently these people also became antagonistic and left the Conference ranks.

Then there were many men who abandoned the Conference on personal grounds. But I do not want to make any mention of them.

Lastly there exists the provincial prejudice between the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir. They

differ in race, language and culture. Ordinarily when the atmosphere is not surcharged with any communal bitterness, these differences become quite visible. The Muslims of the two provinces do not like each other and they frankly express it. In the matter of recruitment in services, Kashmir Muslims frequently complain that their co-religionists of the Jammu province have appropriated the lion's share. This may or may not be so; but one thing is true that Dogra Muslims are recruited in the Army, the doors of which are banged on the Muslims of Kashmir. And that creates a great heart-burning.

The great crisis in the Muslim Conference came when early in 1939 the name and the constitution of the organisation was changed so as to accommodate those non-Muslims who sincerely believed in the cause of the freedom of motherland and were prepared to fight for the establishment of Responsible Government under the banner of the Conference. The Muslim Conference was rechristened as National Conference and many Hindus and Sikhs joined it. Evidently this was a far-reaching change pregnant with great possibilities of developing a political consciousness in the masses. But if Mir Waiz and his followers represent the upper class force in the Kashmir politics, the present-day Muslim leaders of the Conference Party represent the middle classes and petty *bourgeoisie*. Most of them were frightened by the change and did not like it. They were afraid of the non-Muslims and suspected them, and their suspicions were not entirely baseless.

For the Muslim masses have not much to do with the Kashmir movement at present. It is entirely a middle class movement. Now it must be recognised that the middle classes of the Hindus are in a better position, educationally and politically, than the middle classes of the Muslims. They have in certain respects the support of the Government. When therefore the doors of the Muslim Conference, that is the middle class Muslim movement, were thrown open to the non-Muslim middle classes as well, the short-sighted and communal-minded Muslim leaders cherished great doubts about their future. At the present stage of development the interests of the Muslim middle class and the Hindu middle class clash with each other. If the movement is to remain what it is, not to develop on a broader base, then it was certainly ill-started as it largely proved to be. There being no mass pressure from below, these Muslim leaders could think of the movement in terms of a fight of the middle classes against the Government for such petty issues as the loaves and fishes of office. In this they knew that the middle classes of the non-Muslims were on the side of the Government rather than with the Muslims. Not only that. The Hindu middle classes are enjoying privileges and powers which the Muslims do not have. In certain cases the Hindus do so at the expense of the Muslims. The question of State services which I have already discussed is one of such matters. So long as the Kashmir movement represents exclusively the middle classes and fights for their rights, it is difficult to enlist the sympathies

of most Hindus as they will not voluntarily like to surrender their vested interests for the betterment of the middle class Muslims. And the present-day Muslim leaders of the movement desire nothing else than this. They do not like their movement to spread and widen so as to bring the masses in it. They lack in foresight and vision. They are the creatures of the middle class and fight for their welfare. In this they ultimately come into clash with the middle classes of non-Muslims. Yet they seek their co-operation! Obviously they are muddle-headed and are crying for the moon.

But there were a few, very few, Muslim leaders who did not think so narrowly. They had a broader vision and deeper insight. They did not think only of the present; they thought of the future as well. They realised that the movement was primarily for the uplift of the masses and not for the upper or middle classes. The problems of the middle classes, they rightly thought, might appear big at the moment; but they were destined to go into the background in the near future. They must take time by the forelock and prepare the country for great changes. Fortunately the most influential leader of the Muslim Conference, S. M. Abdullah, during those days sided with this small minority of the patriotic Muslim statesmen. By sheer dint of his popularity and personal canvassing they carried the day, and the Muslim Conference was converted into the National Conference. National cause had for the moment triumphed; but for the moment only, as we shall see later.

The change brought about a disruption in the Muslim politics. One by one a large number of workers abandoned the Conference, joined the communal forces and opposed nationalism. The Muslim press, though not very influential, became antagonistic and inimical. Those who stood the ground firmly, including Mr. Abdullah himself, did not remain unaffected by these desertions. They feel confused and perplexed; and, as a result, there is a mess in the politics of the Muslims of the State.

Mussulmans of the State are very backward. Their leaders have failed to bring a broad-mindedness and wise statesmanship to bear on the national problems of their motherland. Matters of trivial nature, though not quite small when considered by themselves, yet certainly of no consequence when compared with bigger problems confronting the masses, absorb their sole thought and mislead them. Neighbourhood of the Punjab and the pernicious influence of the communal and reactionary politics of that province is not a little to blame for this. Though it is of utmost importance and in their own interest that they should avoid any friction with non-Muslim sister communities and make their best endeavours to win their goodwill by inspiring confidence in them in order that nation-wide movement may be launched to achieve Responsible Government in the State, yet often the Muslim leaders come down from the high plane of nationalism to a low sphere where petty communal issues are discussed and a gulf of estrangement is created between them and the non-Muslims. Unfortunately they are not

clever and intelligent enough to put the opponents in the wrong, which the latter are usually doing with respect to them. I have seen Hindus, especially some Kashmiri Pandit leaders, presenting their most communal demands in such a manner as to deceive the best of nationalists for the moment. Muslims feel this keenly and, instead of learning the art of diplomacy, their bitterness becomes more acute. This drives them towards communalism which ultimately harms them, to the great relief of the non-Muslim communal leaders. These conditions will prevail so long as the present leadership among the Muslims is what it is and does not learn statesmanship and diplomacy, or does not change, yielding place to a new leadership. I hope I shall not be misunderstood. I do not wish that they should become adepts in playing vile tricks. But they should not spoil their case by foolish acts born of thoughtlessness.

In this connection I think it would be better to mention the three problems which are undoubtedly of some importance and have engaged the attention of the Muslim leaders from time to time. *First*, the question of the distribution of the Government Services, which has already been discussed. *Secondly*, there is the Cow Slaughter Law, according to which any one (always a Muslim) has to undergo an imprisonment for the offence of killing or injuring a cow or abetting in it. This law is barbarous, and the entire Muslim male population of a village may be tortured by the police when making enquiries and investigations of a case of this nature. Strangely

enough, Hindus do not themselves treat cows quite cordially and affectionately, but they hold that the animal being sacred in their eyes, their religious susceptibilities are wounded by molestation of the cow. There is no doubt that they have very old sentiments about this animal. The matter is, therefore, very delicate, and Muslim leaders with any sense of statesmanship would deal with it cautiously. They would bide their time. But woeful short-sightedness, no less than childish impatience on their part, makes them forget often the main problem of Responsible Government, and take up this question only to endanger public peace and commuual unity by antagonising the Hindus.

When in his Presidential Address to the fifth annual session of the Muslim Conference Mr. S. M. Abdullah raised this question in 1937, I advised him not to do so. I opined that the question of amendment of the Cow Slaughter Law paled into insignificance in the face of bigger issues which were really important. The Muslim Conference Party, which was the largest and the only progressive political party in the State, should not therefore have raised this controversial religious matter. It was unstatesmanlike on their part to do so.

S. M. Abdullah raised the controversy, with the results I had foreseen. As a reaction to the demand of the Muslims there was an agitation in the Jammu province, where Hindus and Sikhs live in larger numbers, against a judgment of the High Court in a cow slaughter case. They committed deliberate contempt of court and defied laws of the State by

resorting to *satyagraha* in August 1937. Many of them were arrested and imprisoned. It was contended by the Sikhs and Hindus that this was deliberate misinterpretation of the clear provisions of the law by a High Court presided over by a Muslim judge, not particularly noted for his legal acumen. Cow slaughter is an offence by itself under the Penal Law of the State. So long as the law stands, the High Court cannot legally get round it by entertaining mitigating circumstances unwarranted by the law of the land ; for instance, the plea that the offence was committed in the dark and there could have been no intention of offending the religious susceptibilities of the Hindu neighbours. So far as the law of the land goes, the case of the Sikhs and Hindus was unimpeachable, and the judgment had to be modified to this extent. One may of course sincerely dislike the law.

While dealing with this problem it must be recognised by Hindus that no religious sentiment can live during the modern times which has to be protected by such stringent regulation as the Cow Slaughter Law which is in force in the State. I believe that Hindu *Dharma* has enough inherent strength to withstand even the buffets of adverse circumstances, and it does not need the support of such severe laws. Cow protection cannot be repugnant to followers of any religion, if it is not imposed harshly. We cannot ignore facts and grim realities. Kashmir is predominantly Mussulman and a law, if it is to work smoothly and remain on the Statute Book, must command the willing consent of at least

the saner section in that majority. I am fully conscious of the fact that the sentiment in this case is so deep-rooted that no Hindu with any grain of religious fervour left in him can tolerate slaughter of cows without feeling immense mental pain. But the sentence of ten years' rigorous imprisonment for the offence, irrespective of the fact whether the crime was committed with the intention of wounding the religious susceptibilities of Hindu neighbours or not, is certainly very harsh. Is it not unjust that the Hindus who do not keep their own cows quite nicely should escape the provisions of this law altogether and yet demand that the law should remain as stringent as it is ?

But the path of the far-seeing Muslim leader and wise statesman is clear. Let us listen to what Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru wrote to me on 23rd October, 1937, on the subject :

"Whatever the rights and wrongs of this particular issue might be, it is perfectly clear that it is a very secondary issue compared to the major political and economic issue before the State. It is a sign of political backwardness of the Mussulmans and the Hindus in the State to lay so much stress on this secondary issue. *Prima facie*, it seems to me obvious that a punishment of ten years is monstrous. It is also obvious that the cattle problem is essentially an economic problem and must be tackled as such. I suppose the present law laying down this tremendous punishment for cow slaughter will have to be changed as it is absurd in the modern world. Nevertheless the raising of such issues at this stage diverts attention from the major issues and is therefore not be commended. It seems to me a great pity that the movement in Kashmir to gain additional freedom has a definite communal tinge. I wish it gave up this communal garb and stood for firm nationalist colours."

The third problem of the law of inheritance is not so important. It is a law which affects the civil liberties of all people more than the Muslims. No apostate from one religion to another is allowed to inherit ancestral property. As Islam is a proselytising religion and as very few Muslims adopt Hinduism, Mussulmans have made it a grievance of their own. The finding of the Grievances Enquiry Commission in this behalf was as follows :

> " It must be remembered that the question at issue before the Commission is not whether the law in British India or elsewhere is in theory the most ideal. The function of the Commission is to decide whether a definite grievance exists, and, if so, to make recommendations for its redress. The issue may therefore be stated as follows. Have the Muslims of Jammu and Kashmir any legitimate grievance in the fact that the State law relating to the consequences of apostasy is based upon the religious laws of Hinduism and Islam ? To this question it would appear that there can be one answer. The answer is in the negative."

Broadly speaking there are two forces working at present among Muslims. There are the Nationalists who stand for political change and progress without any considerations of caste or creed, and are desirous of securing equality in every walk of life for all. Theirs is the National Conference about which I shall have to say a good deal in a subsequent chapter. There are the Muslim communalists. It is a heterogenous mass composed of all those parties and personalities who have left the movement from its very inception for political differences or on personal grounds. They include Usuf Shahis, the Ahmadis, the followers of Mir Waiz Khanqah-i-Mualla, the middle class communal

leaders of different shades of opinion, and the personal enemies of the Conference workers. At present these people are struggling to solidify themselves. In spite of their best efforts they were not able to hold an open session which was announced at Kotli. Though all of them have declared their resolve to oppose the "pernicious doctrine" of Nationalism and support the party which is brought into existence to represent Muslims on communal lines, it appears difficult that these diverse elements with different ideologies will coalesce. Obviously the interests of the various parties now in opposition to the national thought lie in different directions. A communal movement among the Muslims, if it is to be successful, will be entirely a middle class movement and divested of the mass support it cannot remain very radical in outlook. It will ultimately rest on the goodwill and support that it gets from the Government. For the moment communalists appear to be more radical. They vehemently oppose the Hindus and the Government alike, and in this they can beat the nationalist Muslim leaders.

Oddly enough, the Usuf Shahis, the communal Muslims and the Nationalists, none of whom can honestly claim to represent the Muslim masses truly, all speak in their name and on their behalf and pretend to be influenced by them. It is highly significant that Muslims of Kashmir, in spite of their overwhelming majority, have demanded separate electorates, in all kinds of elections!

The leaders of the Kashmir movement have paid no attention to the social upliftment of the Mus-

lims. Not a single national school or a college has been started to educate young men on healthier lines. Three denominational high schools started before the year 1931 exist to impart education to boys, which is in no way better than that obtaining in Government Schools. One of these High Schools at Anantnag is under direct supervision of a well-known Conference leader, M. A. Beg. I can see no necessity of running these schools if the products do not have the patriotic spirit and love for freedom to form the vanguard of the forces for progress.

Nothing has been done to help the people in the countryside to break through the degrading customs of wasteful expenditure on weddings and other social celebrations. No effort is made to teach the masses the laws of hygiene and sanitation. Cleanliness is unknown among the poorer classes of the Muslims, yet no public worker considers it his duty to work among them to make them clean. No thought has been bestowed on the emancipation of women, whose condition in Kashmir cries for an immediate change. The idea of social reform has never entered the brain of the Muslim leaders.

During six months of the year the entire peasant population is out of employment, yet no Muslim leader considers it a part of his duty to formulate a programme for them and utilise their time for any constructive work. As a matter of fact this side of the movement has been entirely ignored. Muslim leaders only know to deliver speeches, and they are at their best when there is a stir. When conditions are normal, they find themselves unemployed and

time hangs heavy on them. This is one of the reasons why the movement came to a stop as soon as the exciting times were over.

Muslim patriots, lovers of freedom and fighters for the independence of their motherland, do not take any pride in the past glory of their country. To a Muslim the history of Kashmir begins from the day the rule of the valley was taken over by the alien Muslim kings. In view of the fact that almost all the Muslims of Kashmir are descendants of the old Hindu inhabitants, this is rather surprising. To tell the truth, most of the Muslims feel embarrassed when they are reminded of this fact. They would like to obliterate the part of their history which relates to the period when they were Hindus and had not yet embraced Islam. A Kashmir Mussalman knows nothing about such eminent historical figures of his country as Lalitaditya or Avantivarman, Vinayaditya or Queen Dida. He has no knowledge of the philosophical and literary treasures that have been left behind by great writers and geniuses mentioned in chapter I, some of whom can easily compare with the classical authors of international fame. An educated Kashmir Muslim knows the history of Arabia and the countries which accepted Islam, he can even tell you about the rise and fall of some such non-Muslim empires as Iran with beaming eyes and a glow on his face. He feels proud of all these heroic exploits of the Muslim kings with whom he has nothing in common except the faith which his forefathers accepted long after the kings were dead and gone. He even feels pride

in non-Muslim heroes of Muslim countries in the pre-Islamic times. But the history of his own heroes is unknown to him. He considers it unnecessary to learn anything about them. This attitude of mind born of religious bigotism vitiates his sense of patriotism. Muslims must become admirers of their past and take legitimate pride in the greatness of their ancestors and ancient institutions of their country before they can claim to own the land which they inherited from them. This does not mean that they should give up their religion or the study of the history of Islam. No one can deny the debt Kashmir owes to Islam. Fanatics among Hindus may say anything they like, but it is undeniable that the services rendered by the new faith at the time when Hinduism had become bankrupt in Kashmir and had lost its moral stamina, were inestimable. If the soul of the people was not lost, it was not a little due to the moral regeneration brought about by this new virile faith. So what is needed is that blind love of religion should not make the Muslims prejudiced to the extent of forgetting the glorious past of their motherland. The Muslim of Kashmir needs a leader to teach him such a lesson. For the present it is a sad irony that while the patriots of Persia should make efforts to revive the Pahalvi art and literature, which belongs to a period when Islam was unknown in that country, the Muslims of Kashmir would like to thrust Persian script not only on the Muslims but on the unwilling Hindus also.

An average Mussalman is an unsophisticated

human being. Long oppression and maltreatment have killed all sense of self-respect in him. There are two traits of his character which every well-wisher of a "Hatoo" must point out. His almost inveterate habit of lying and want of personal cleanliness. He has developed his lying into the art of, what is known in Kashmiri, as "damb." This connotes a peculiar kind of prevarication and specious arguments in justification of his lies, when he is found out. But he is extremely grateful for any small good turn done to him. He is hard working and capable of rendering great sacrifices. He has been much abused by the officials of the Government and the *mullahs* of Islam. These exploiters have now new allies in the communal leaders. The Kashmir Muslim is not a bigot at heart. Ordinarily he loves his Hindu neighbour. But he is very backward. His backwardness has disappointed many a patriot; for unscrupulous people have not been wanting among Muslim leaders who have taken an undue advantage of this backwardness and killed his urge for great political and social changes which was born largely of economic need. If the present ideological confusion in Kashmir politics, especially among Muslim leaders, is cleared and efforts are made to rally the masses under the standard of freedom, I have no doubt in my mind that the Kashmir Muslims are sure to give a good and honourable account of themselves.

# CHAPTER XI

## The Minorities

The problem of minorities in Kashmir is a difficult one, more difficult than it is in British India where the majority community is Hindu, and the principal minority is Muslim, but the rulers are Christians. So long as India remains religion-ridden this difference in the respective faiths of the rulers on the one side and all the ruled on the other is a great sentimental advantage to the fighters for freedom of India. This is not so in the case of Kashmir or Hyderabad. While the vast majority of the people of the State is Muslim as in Kashmir or Hindu as in Hyderabad, the Hindu or Muslim minority has a unity of religion with the ruler of the land. Religious sentiment, therefore, plays an important part in the politics of the State. The Muslims believe that the Hindus as a class cannot wish ill of a monarchical system of Government which is headed by one of their co-religionists. Non-Muslim public workers possessing transparent patriotism and sincerity have been maligned and dubbed as

supporters of the irresponsible Government only because they profess the same religion as the Maharaja. The fire of their love for Responsible Government has often been extinguished by the water of suspicious whisperings in the Muslim camp. On the other hand, the Hindus, by and large, have always suspected even some of the best Muslim patriots to be no more than intriguers hatching up designs to end the Hindu Raj. Whole audiences composed of thousands of people have been misdirected by slogans "Remember Pathan Raj"; famished Hindu masses have been quietened and quietened successfully many a time with a sermon that it is better to live in starvation under Hindu Absolutism than to work for bringing about Responsible Government which will be dominated by Muslims. Of course there is little of logic in all this On either side it is the narrow-minded middle class politician who speaks. The masses when they awaken will neither care for the one nor for the other. They will reconstruct the society according to their own needs and as will suit them best. The future Government of the people will be dominated by them and the considerations of caste and creed will come to an end. But at the moment the stage is entirely occupied by the *bourgeoisie* and so the problem of the religious minorities exists and must receive our attention.

But religion alone does not enter into the politics of the minorities. As in the case of the Muslims, provincial bias and racial animosity play a prominent part in the affairs of the Hindus. The uneven

development of the different classes and the educational backwardness of some of them are factors which must be considered. Then the favoured position of the Rajputs very much complicates the matter. In order to be able to understand the present-day Kashmir politics and have a full grasp of the problem of minorities, it is necessary that the internal politics of all these sections of the people of the State is studied in some detail.

### (1) Kashmiri Pandits

**"Long before the Mussulmans of Kashmir had become politically conscious, it was Kashmiri Pandits who fought for modernism in administration. It was they who first raised the cry of Kashmir for Kashmiris. It was they who first demanded a legislature, a free press and a free platform. They cannot today go back on their nationalism and repudiate these and other essentials of good Government."**

*(Kashmiri Pandits' memorial submitted to His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur in September 1931.)*

In a population of 36 lakhs of people a minority composed of 52,697 souls does not ordinarily matter very much. In normal circumstances the attitude of 1·5 per cent of the people does not seriously affect the politics of a country. Yet it must be admitted that Kashmiri Pandits who form such a microscopic minority figure prominently and loom large in the affairs of the Kashmir State. "They are a problem who remain seriously to be tackled," said Sir Albion Banerji in 1929, and they continue to be that serious problem even now.

Kashmiri Pandits are the most highly educated

community in the State. No one who had to say something about Kashmir has missed them. They have been regarded as intelligent and clever. In a letter Sir B. J. Glancy wrote to me that he considered them as the most intelligent community in the whole of India. They are handsome, clean and decent. Their frugality is proverbial and they can do with a penny where another man will require three. But they can spend in order to maintain a certain good form. They lack the *bania* ways and are not as good at laying by for future use. A well-to-do Kashmiri Pandit enjoys good food and entertaining company. They have a very developed class consciousness and while individually they will bitterly complain against one another, at the time of crisis, imaginary or real, they will, to the surprise of all, unite like one man. They have displayed wonderful compactness in the past. All other communities, Muslims including, have felt jealous of this trait of character and have vainly tried to divide them.

Kashmiri Pandits have a glorious past. They take unbounded and legitimate pride in the Kashmir that was. To them the religious places of their motherland are more sacred than the holy shrines of the outside Hindu world. A Pandit adores his native Ganges, his own Prayag, and worships his own ancestral gods. The history of the heroes of ancient Kashmir sends a thrill of joy through his whole being and he is never weary of extolling the greatness of *Shaivism*, the school of philosophy which was born in his own land. Kashmiri Pandits are the respositories of the old culture of this country.

*Sharda*, the local script of Sanskrit language, is still used by the Pandits and their horoscopes are still written in it. Whatever may be his present attitude towards Kashmir politics, a Pandit is intensely devoted to the land of his birth. Under economic stress he may leave his native land to earn his living elsewhere, but he will never cease to be a Kashmiri Pandit, never cease to love his land of birth, as the land of his forefathers. His ties with the country of his forefathers do not take root so much in religion as they do in patriotism. A Kashmiri Pandit is equally proud of the greatness of Zain-ul-Abidin and Akbar. He tries to forget the hardships that he had to undergo during the Muslim and Mughal rule. But he has nothing but hatred for the Pathan rule and relates the barbarities and the atrocities of that period with utter disgust.

Till three decades ago Kashmiri Pandits read Persian as court language and had come to love it. An old Kashmiri Pandit reads the Persian poetry of the native poets with great relish. He is an ardent admirer of Ghani and Munshi Bhavani Das Kachru. With modern education this has changed to a great extent.

Political persecution through many centuries has made Kashmiri Pandits cunning, crafty and garrulous. They are never weary of debating over a subject and, like Goldsmith's village schoolmaster, even though vanquished they will argue still. You can never subdue them by arguments, at any rate, where their interests are concerned. Unhappily some of them can be mischievous and can harm their opponents.

A Kashmiri Pandit can be clever at intrigue and diplomacy; and many Kashmiri Pandits have risen to high posts in British India on account of their ready wit and tact.

Kashmiri Pandits are great organisers. Offices of the Government and big business firms have been put on a sound footing and well established by Pandit subordinates. Given the assurance of a monthly salary, high or low, a Kashmiri Pandit will work like a bee and produce wonderful results, surprising even for the owner of the concern. But he needs supervision. Centuries of slavery have deprived him of initiative and made him satisfied with the lot where safety is recompense enough for freedom not unoften attended with risks and adventures, and where petty corruption is profitable. It is seldom that a business partnership between Kashmiri Pandits succeeds; and there have been cases when they have been disloyal or dishonest.

Economically Pandits are neither starving nor surfeiting. Barring a few *jagirdars* and big landlords, almost all of them belong to the middle class. I have never heard of a Pandit dying of starvation or want of proper clothing. There are undoubtedly some destitute widows or orphans who are living miserable lives, but the community does not entirely ignore them. Either individual philanthropists or some communal organisations feel it their duty to support them. But the most potent influence for good in this respect is the joint family system and a peculiar sense of family self-respect and pride.

The main sources of income of the community

are Government service, business, or lands. The best brains of the Pandits are absorbed in the offices of the Government, stagnating for want of good use; rotting for want of opportunity to develop. As there are no other avenues outside Government service as secure as this, Pandits hesitate to leave these ranks. The great aspiration of a Pandit young man is to secure a Government job. From his very birth he is trained for "Service." Mothers bless their sons, *purohits* their *jajmans* and all elders their young folk, that they may get jobs and promotions. And the job usually aspired to is a clerkship in an office. I have yet to know a Kashmiri Pandit who would voluntarily give up a Government job, however low, to serve his country. This is a slur on his patriotism.

This service mentality is very old among the Pandits. As clerks and accountants, they have served the country throughout ages. The Emperor Aurangzeb, not a willing admirer of Hindu superiority in any walk of life, once bitterly complained that his accounts would not be in a muddle, only if he could get hold of a Kashmiri Pandit Accountant. During the Pathan and Sikh times Pandits carried on creditably the work in the offices. They learnt the court language with a promptitude all their own and even became scholars in the languages of their foreign rulers. When during the period of Dogras, English became the common language of correspondence throughout India and it began to be introduced in the Government offices in Kashmir, they were the first to learn it. Having done so they had to wage a

determined struggle against non-State subjects who were in occupation of the offices. But the Dogra rulers never encouraged them, on the contrary they stopped their growth beyond a limit. "A confession of the policy followed by the Government with regard to Kashmiri Pandits is contained in a note recorded several years ago by the then Superintendent of Game Preservation Department on the case of a Kashmiri Pandit: that the candidate was *most suitable* but that he was a Pandit and that was his disqualification," thus said the spokesman of Kashmiri Pandits in his memorial to the Grievances Enquiry Commission. "Kashmiri Pandits who are a highly educated community and represent the intellectual class are, in a sense, depressed, because they get no opportunity of rising either in Government Service or in any other field of useful activity such as industry or commerce; with the result that they are also discontented and present a problem which requires to be seriously tackled," said Sir Albion Banerji in his famous interview in March 1929. They have, therefore, mostly remained a community of clerks.

Pandits are middle class men. Government Service has been and continues to be an economic problem for them. "Kashmiri Pandits have no love for the petty clerkship and even for Government service. For our sister communities it may be a matter of political ambition, a matter of voice in the Government, but with us it is a question of to be or not to be. It is our acute economic distress that makes us cling to the Government posts," so said the spokesman in his memorial just mentioned. The

vocal and vociferous among Pandits are employed in Government jobs. As soon as they find that some other section of the people are attempting to displace them from their present position in the office, they raise a terrific howl and until the danger goes out of sight they do not cease their propaganda, which takes manifold forms. The advantageous position in the offices even as lower grade clerks, does give them some political power. They are fully informed about official activities and, in certain cases, even well-guarded secrets. Then again the case of a Pandit is expeditiously disposed of and dealt with in an office where they are in a majority than that of a non-Pandit who has not unoften to face many inconveniences at the hands of clerks. The history of Pandits, nay, the history of the State itself, to a large extent, might have been quite different from what it is, if they had not held this dominant position in the offices of the Government. But, as it is, the Pandits have become an eye-sore to the educated classes belonging to the other communities living in the State. They have, every now and then, bitterly complained against their preponderance. This bitterness becomes acute when the educated young men of all other communities realise that they cannot easily and successfully compete with young men of the Pandit community.

A large number of educated Pandits is unemployed. It was definitely proved before the Dalal Committee that the number of unemployed Pandits is five times as large as educated Mohammedans who may be employed in Government Service.

Pandits therefore insist that while making appointments to Government jobs superior merit alone should count. The Pandits say: "Our community cannot grudge other people entering State service in large numbers, provided they are not admitted through the back door of favouritism and do not claim immunity from open competition." They conveniently forget that if this principle is strictly followed, little chance will be left for the members of other communities to enter Government Services. Of course, from a purely national point of view, their contention is highly sound and quite correct. But in India no political problem can be satisfactorily solved if different communal viewpoints are not taken into consideration. Pandits themselves, for instance, would be the last to accept unadulterated nationalism in the matter of representation to legislature and municipalities of the State. Under the present conditions when the atmosphere is surcharged with communalism, there is not a ghost of a chance for the Pandits to get even one seat either in the legislature or any municipal or town area committee if the system of communal representation is done away with. From the day a demand has been made by the nationalists that joint electorates with adult suffrage should be introduced, the demand of Pandit Nationalism in services has been exposed. The Pandit leaders have expressed themselves against any system of joint electorates. From these facts it is quite obvious that the Pandit point of view in the matter of Services is not based on the professed claim of nationalism but is in reality

communalism masquerading as nationalism.

But one fact which has been lost in the welter of controversies about the services must be mentioned in passing and in fairness to them. There is a widespread but entirely groundless belief in official as well as non-official circles that Pandits have monopolised the Government services or, at any rate, they are there in larger numbers than they are entitled to. There is no doubt that their own tactlessness and foolish activities have been in no little measure responsible for the spread of this belief. Strangely enough, the majority of Pandits themselves are under this impression. But the truth is otherwise.

I have already recognised that Pandits do hold a dominant position in the offices of the Government. But offices are not the only place where Government has to offer jobs. If the position of the Pandits with regard to Government Services is to be decided, it will be reasonable and just that the services are considered as a whole and not only a part of them. Now, the Pandits are not taken into Military services. The doors of His Highness' Army have been banged upon them. Thus out of about 23 thousand odd posts in the gift of the State they can have absolutely no share in more than seven thousand. According to Sir Albion Banerji they get no chance of rising in Government Service. After making relevant enquiries in this behalf, the Glancy Commission wrote :

"Kashmiri Pandits complain that out of 763 gazetted appointments in the State their community holds only 74

including 17 Pandit officers imported from British India or elsewhere. Though this representation compares favourably with the case of Kashmir Muslims whose number of gazetted appointments is reported to be only ten, *it is certainly not a high proportion.*" (Italics mine)

The Commissioners added:

" It is claimed that, although no scholarships have been specifically reserved for Kashmiri Pandits, over fifty per cent of their numbers are literate—a far higher percentage than that obtaining in any other community: that ministerial work is their hereditary occupation and that they have no other means of subsistence readily available. *There is certainly force in this contention.*" (Italics mine).

The actual figures of Pandits in the non-gazetted grades of the civil departments were not collected by the Glancy Commission, but they have been non-officially estimated. During the hey-day of their glory the Pandits did not hold more than 15 per cent of these jobs. Considering what the Glancy Commission admitted about the helpless position of the Pandits, this again is not a high proportion, certainly not a proportion that should make them a target of constant attack from all sides. The literacy figures of the male population of every community in the State must count in this respect: 63 per cent of Kashmiri Pandit males are literate as against 15 per cent of other Hindus, 8 per cent of Buddhists, 3 per cent of Muslims, 21 per cent of Sikhs, 11 per cent of Rajputs, 3·5 per cent of Kashmiri Muslims, and 1.4 per cent of the Meghs. " Thus it will be seen that, far from enjoying any monopoly or position of advantage in Government Service, Pandits have never received what was their due by dint of merit."

But the Pandit leadership is not a little to blame for the ill-feeling which has been created in non-Pandit quarters against them. As I said above, the best minds and brains of Pandits are in Government Service. They are the silently vocal sections in the community. Others engaged in different pursuits such as commerce and land have little say in the political affairs of the country. Pandit Government officials immensely influence the leadership of the Pandits. The Pandit masses, (if I may take the liberty of calling other Pandits by that name) must and do sacrifice their own interests to safeguard the interests of these official Pandits.

Pandits have a representative organisation called the Sanatana Dharama Young Men's Association. It was founded in 1925 for religious purposes but became actively engaged in politics from 1931. At present the President of this body is Pandit Shiv Narayan Fotedar, a gentleman who is thoroughly official-ridden and cannot see the interests of his community beyond the appointment of unemployed young men on petty Government jobs or the promotions and transfers of those who are already in these Services. The Association runs a daily journal, the *Martand*, which faithfully carries out the policy of the President. It is a paradox that such a highly educated and intelligent community as Kashmiri Pandits should allow a paper to circulate in their name which is incorrect in language, circumscribed in outlook, and narrow-minded. By preaching a hymn of hate during the whole course of its existence, the *Martand* has done more harm than

good to the cause of the Pandits. By its irresponsible and unintelligent writings it has confirmed the belief that the Pandits do really hold a dominant position in the services which is, all things considered, not the case.

Few Kashmiri Pandits are tillers of the soil. All those who own lands are absentee landlords. The real nature of the middle class Muslim movement becomes further evident by the fact that while attacking Kashmiri Pandits, the Muslim leaders have never raised their little finger against these absentee landlords but always made Pandit clerks the target of their denunciation. By taking absentee landlords to task they would have supported the demand of the Muslim peasantry but at the same time deprived their own class also of a vested interest, a thing which they would never like to do. Besides, it presupposed an active support of the masses to the movement, which is entirely lacking.

It is a tragedy too deep for tears that the Pandits, who were the fittest and most competent to lead the democratic movement against absolutism in the beginning and were actually the men who demanded modernism in Government before 1931, should have played a most reactionary part in the struggle after that year. There is no doubt that the communal disturbances of 1931 produced a strong reaction in their minds. But it must be remembered that Pandits themselves contributed not a little to the causes which ultimately resulted in communal disturbances. Had they been sagacious enough to bring a generous mind to bear upon the demands

and the grievances of the Muslims on the eve of the agitation of 1931, matters should not have come to this pass and the relations between the communities should have been much happier, to the benefit of Kashmiri Pandits themselves. But as soon as the middle class Muslims exploited the mass movement and demanded a share in Government Services on the basis of population and communalism, Pandits took fright and became the champions of Hindu communalism and defenders of the Hindu Raj. They were equipped with powers to do it intelligently. They played the historic role of anti-revolution to a finish and played it also only too well. At one time they joined hands with Usuf Shah to do so, and were supremely successful in saving those classes and sections of the people whom the revolution would have severely hit. In doing so they damaged their own cause. They have created a gulf between themselves and the masses which it is not easy to bridge over.

The official politics of the Pandits during the last ten years has been most disappointing for all patriots. They have firmly stood against all kinds of political progress. They have played the part of political obscurantists. By their deeds, too numerous to be mentioned in the brief space at my disposal, they have proved to the hilt that they were never so happy as when the progressive elements in body-politic were ruthlessly suppressed. It is true that these elements were mixed up with fanatical communalism, yet it is true also that while professing to oppose Muslim communalism, they have set their

face against all advance. They do not seem to realise that their ultimate interest lies with the masses, though the progress of the Muslim masses may be inimical to their present middle class position. As their interests have tended to make them side with the Government generally, the Muslims have deemed the Kashmiri Pandits synonymous with the authorities. A fight against the Government has taken the form of a fight with the Pandits. The Government has taken the fullest advantage of this position and utilised the resourcefulness of the community to its utmost, which has been offered to it very cheap. Thus it was that what the official machinery of propaganda could not achieve in misleading the outside world and subduing the people at home during the days of many trials and tribulations, was done by the facile pen and the glib tongue of the Pandits. Quaintly enough there is hardly a Pandit young man who has been in the college and does not profess to be a socialist, though most of them know next to nothing about it. Pandit young men feel no qualms of conscience in supporting their own communal movement while they think they are the best nationalists in the country.

Kashmiri Pandits have a knack of presenting their case in such a way as to attract attention and create sympathy. Individual cases can become communal matters and communal problems assume national importance when Pandits are involved. Of course, very few really intelligent people can be deceived by this; but many a time the purpose of putting the

Muslims in a wrong by this method has been successfully achieved.

But to know only this much about Pandits would be only to know one side of the picture. It is true that this is the official policy and programme of the community so far as the Sanatam Dharma Young Men's Association and the *Martand* represent them. Happily, however, progressive elements are not totally absent in the community. It would be rather surprising in the highest degree if in such a highly educated and intelligent class no one would espouse the cause of nationalism and progress, even in circumstances both internal and external that made their existence well-nigh impossible. Such elements have always been there though, till the days when Muslim politics received a new orientation in 1936 and was changed from communalism to nationalism they were rather latent. Efforts have been made from so early a time as 1934 to revolutionise the mentality of the Pandits and wean them away from the pernicious influence of the official class. Liberal Pandit young men have openly joined hands with Muslim patriots. Their sphere of influence has been increasingly widening. In the agitation of September 1938 about sixty educated and eminent Pandit public workers went to jail and suffered in many other ways for the cause of Responsible Government. It is significant enough that they were all condemned by the *Martand* and the communal Pandit leaders as renegades and traitors to their community. But a rift has permanently taken place among them. The Young Men's

Association is not a force that it once was. Unemployed Pandit young men whose number, already too large, is growing from year to year, are going over to the side of the nationalists. They have begun to realise that the present system of irresponsible Government cannot solve their problem. They are sick of the extant social order. There are others who though well-established in life feel intellectually satisfied that a drastic change is necessary for the progress of the motherland. They feel that forces have developed and are working for this change. Nothing can stop them. It will be futile and dangerous for the Pandits to stem the tide.

Unlike that of the Muslims the record of Kashmiri Pandits in the sphere of social reform is creditable and praiseworthy. They have not only upheld the tradition of being the most highly educated community in the State but have also been pioneers in spreading education in the valley. The whole machinery of the Education Department of the Government has mainly been run with the services of low-paid Pandit teachers. Almost the whole staff of the Mission Schools in Srinagar and other towns is composed of Pandits. When the Muslims started private enterprise to spread education in their own community, they had to requisition the services of the educated Pandits, which were voluntarily offered and joyously given. The Dalal Committee passed very adverse comments on the patriotism of Muslims when it was brought to their notice that the educated Muslims preferred Government jobs to service in the Islamia Schools

because of better emoluments offered by the State, and that a large number of Pandit young men were appointed in these Muslim Schools.

There is an organisation in Kashmir known as the Women's Welfare Trust which was started in 1926. It is being run by a few unknown Kashmiri Pandits who have always shown great reluctance to come into limelight. This organisation runs ten girls schools—one high, three middle and six primary—and one Seva Sadan (Adult Women's School). Three of these schools are meant solely for Muslim girls. The Trust has extended its activities to the Jammu Province and opened a school for the Harijan girls in Jammu city. More than one thousand girls are reading in these schools. The high sense of patriotism and service to motherland, irrespective of any consideration of caste or creed, which has prompted these great Pandits to run this organisation, cannot be overemphasised. No communal excitement or agitation in the country from time to time during the past ten years has disturbed the calm equilibrium of their mind. They never lost their balance.

At present there are four high schools and many primary schools all over the valley which have been founded by Pandits and are efficiently run by them. Unlike Muslim institutions, again, these are not denominational, and even their names do not indicate that they belong to any sect or community exclusively.*

*Since this was written some denominational schools have been started by Pandits also.

Last year four Pandit doctors started a national hospital and a maternity home in Srinagar, where patients are treated irrespective of any restrictions of caste or creed. Thousands of poor Muslims have been cured in this Hospital, some of whom were admitted as indoor patients without any fees. This is the only institution of its kind which has been established in Srinagar by non-official enterprise.

Pandit leaders have included social reform in their political programme. The Young Men's Association has from time to time struck a blow at the evil customs and made efforts, though unfortunately more often unsuccessfully than not, to root them out. Pandit women are not *purdah*-ridden as are the middle and upper class Muslim ladies. What is more, Pandits are anxious to make their women equal partners in life; they do not grudge them any emancipation. Pandits are not social reactionaries.

The great social evil among Hindus is the ban on remarriage of widowed women. About 25 per cent of the Pandit women are widows, most of them quite young. Their remarriage was disapproved by society. What was worse, it was not recognised even by the law of the land. In 1928 a movement was started to combat this evil. It was very unpopular at the start, and those who identified themselves with it had to pay heavily. But in 1930 the law was amended so as to legalise such marriages. Within the last 12 years more than two hundred such marriages have been celebrated and the institution of widow remarriages is becoming popular day by day. It goes to the credit of

Pandit leaders that almost all of them have encouraged the cause.

I feel I have written more about Kashmiri Pandits than I had bargained for. I could go on discussing them in a volume, because owing to various reasons, they are an important minority in the State. Is it also because I am myself a Pandit by birth ?

But whether I discussed them at length or in brief, this much is certain that they will play an important role in the immediate politics of the country. They have certain qualifications which all other communities lack. They are highly educated. They do not starve. They are compact and organised. And last but in no way least, they have no love lost with the ruling classes; they love their land of birth. In any movement which will be launched for Responsible Government and for the expansion of democracy, they are destined to figure prominently on the side of the popular forces. If it appears rather difficult now that this should be so, it is because the political movement at present is not conducted for the actual transfer of power from absolutism to popular hands, but for positions and places. In this the middle classes of the different communities have come into conflict with each other. This conflict is bound to end soon, when the present uneven position of different communities in state services is rectified to some extent, which is in the process of being done. The conflict might cease sooner, if the masses were rallied under the banner of the movement and pressure was felt from below. Such a

consummation is devoutly to be wished for, and is is up to the nationalist leaders of both the communities to hasten its realisation.

### (2) Rajputs

"Maharaja Gulab Singh was a Mian Rajput and the extension of his power led to the advancement of his caste brethren who were and are in great part the instruments of the acquisition and of the Government of the dependencies of Jammu......Individual conceit is common with them and they are avaricious "......(Drew).

The Rajputs are neither highly educated nor intelligent, yet they are getting the lion's share everywhere. The large part of the State Army is their monopoly, where they get decent salaries and an opportunity to develop their bodies and muscles. Civil services are, of course, open to them too. During the early years of the present Maharaja's rule some of the Rajputs wished that most of the departments should remain under the control of Rajputs so that a sort of Rajput oligarchy might be founded. One of them had the burning ambition to become the Prime Minister of the State. The total population of the Rajputs in the State is 1,32,440. A small number of them are Mians, that is, belonging to the ruling class. Only 6 per cent of the Rajputs are literate. Yet they dominate the services both Military and Civil. Rajputs with no qualifications, under-educated, or almost illiterate and in all respects unfit to hold important charges, were put in responsible positions before 1932. The case of an inefficient and almost illiterate Rajput who could barely sign his name and yet became the head of a

department is notorious.

Soon after his accession to the *gaddi* the present Maharaja declared that though he was a Hindu by birth, his religion was justice. Obviously this is a very laudable idea and was highly appreciated by all the people living in his territories. But in actual practice the Dogra Rule could never rise above its partiality for Rajputs and has excessively favoured them. This policy was so marked that even the Muslim leaders of 1931 wanted to take advantage of His Highness' weakness by saying in their memorial while discussing the constitution of the Assembly that "of the 30 nominated members, 10 should be Rajputs being an important minority and representing the Ruling dynasty." This was only to humour His Highness and powerful Rajputs, but certainly a slur on the revolutionary mentality of the Muslims.

Even after such widespread political and communal disturbances, which were not a little born of this partiality for Rajputs, things have not improved satisfactorily and to a great extent. Rajputs are favoured at the cost of other communities. Men are placed in charge of jobs for which they are unsuitable. Rajput Military Officers are transferred to the Civil Departments, and without knowing anything about land revenue system or law, are put in charge of responsible posts.

*Jagirs* have been granted to the Rajputs out of all proportion to their number. A big slice of the fertile land of Kashmir has been handed over to Rajput *Jagirdars.* It should be remembered that

there are no indigenous Rajputs in Kashmir. There is practically no unemployment among the Rajputs. None of their educated young men are wandering the streets for want of employment.

The Rajputs consider the whole State as their *Jagir* and are not prepared to accept that the Maharaja is the undisputed ruler of the land in this respect. It is strange how the mentality of Rajputs is similar to that of the upper class Muslims of Hyderabad (Deccan). In their memorial to His Highness submitted on 31st October, 1931, they candidly, though vainly, stated :

> "It is not unknown to Your Highness that Jammu is the hereditary seat of Dogra Rajputs, and other parts of the country now under the sway of Your Highness were acquired and conquered by Your Highness' illustrious forefathers with the help of the Rajputs and formed into the territories now known as Jammu and Kashmir State."

Not unnaturally the Rajputs held the political leaders of 1931 movement in undisguised contempt. All demand for progress was pure crime in their eyes. They wanted no change. This is what they said :

> "We regret that in spite of Your Highness' magnanimity culminating in general amnesty, the ungrateful agitators are still at work in their criminal designs to achieve their mischievous ends."

When it was reported that owing to the pressure of public opinion and the mass movement the Maharaja was prepared to grant substantial reforms to the people, the Rajputs threatened to start a counter-agitation against the decision. They behave like the Britishers in India or as the Anglo-Indians

who, though born in the land, consider themselves superior to the ordinary run of Indians. These people will be the last to join any revolutionary movement. They will be subdued and made to behave like common citizens only when the masses gain power and the distinctions of caste and race are totally obliterated.

A wise ruler with his eye on the future of the State would never allow any class prejudices to play a part in the governance of the country. An experienced Maharaja, as the present one undoubtedly is, would never let any suspicions grow in the minds of the subjects, after the happenings of the past several years, that invidious distinctions are made in treating the people belonging to different communities. Yet, unfortunately, this is what takes place even now. To give a recent example: while consolidating the Arms Act, His Highness' Government have disarmed the whole nation but allowed the Hindu Rajputs, the members of his own community, to possess one firearm with sufficient ammunition for each family for purposes of religious ritual and worship. In the present deteriorated international situation grave misgivings have been given rise to by this legislation in the minds of other subjects, and His Highness was approached not to give his assent to such a law, but to no purpose.

The Rajputs called Mians who are fortunate to receive this preferential treatment are small in numbers. They are barely a few thousands. The mass uprising of 1931 has opened their eyes They have realised that the counting of heads matters.

Before 1931 a large number of Thakars, who are Rajputs of lower caste and do not belong to the ruling race, were not classed as Rajputs. In order to exploit them and derive advantages out of their numerical strength, they have now been included among Rajputs. This change has not benefited the poor Thakars. They continue economically and politically to be what they were—serfs.

The Dogra Rajput is a lovable specimen of bodily beauty. He has played a prominent part in the shaping of politics in Northern India during the last century. He has manly courage and is unsophisticated gentle and brave. He retains the qualities of ancient Indian soldiery and ranks among the best. The Rajputs rendered distinguished services in the last Great European War.

"Seeing how in far-away countries, often in cold climates thoroughly unsuited to them, sometimes in small bands surrounded by a population that looks on them with no friendly eye, they hold their own and support the rule of the Maharaja, we must credit them with much patience and some courage," wrote Fredric Drew. "Some power, too, they have of physical endurance; they can endure hunger and heat, and exertion as far as light marching on long journeys is concerned; but heavy labour or extreme cold will knock them up. Faithfulness to the master they serve, is another of their virtues."

It is not the fault of a Dogra Rajput that Kashmiris are not recruited in the Army. He is in an advantageous position and enjoys it; who would not?

### (3) Jammu Hindus

Non-Rajput Hindus of Jammu are a mixture of many elements. Broadly speaking, they may be divided into two parts. First, Brahmins who are educated, intelligent, "in character deep, clever to scheme and close in concealing." Though not as unfortunate as Pandits of Kashmir, they are not as fortunate as the Rajputs who are their neighbours. The Brahmins have always grudged the advantageous position of the Rajputs and have hesitated wholly to identify themselves with the Rajput rule. They were annoyed at the mass movement of the Muslims and, like all other minorities, opposed it. Many of them are the tillers of the soil.

Among the non-Brahmins Mahajans are a force to be reckoned with. True to their profession, these people consider everything in terms of money. The change in the politics does not matter so long as their bags are filled with silver and gold and are safe. They became reactionaries and opposed the popular movement because it largely affected their business and displaced their position. It is doubtful whether the *Sahukars* of Mirpur perpetrated greater hardships on the Muslim peasantry by sucking their blood during the period preceding 1931, or the Muslim hooligans inflicted greater barbarities and outrages on them during the days of widespread loot and arson in January 1932.

Mahajans, by and large, will remain on the popular side, if the exhorbitant rate of interest and their corrupt practices in money-lending are allowed

to remain intact. I am afraid they will be sorely disappointed in this.

Jammu Hindus both Brahmin and non-Brahmin can feel proud of a number of patriots who always demanded reforms in the administration even before 1931, though in a very moderate form.

### (4) Harijans

About two lacs of human beings (I doubt whether they can be described by such a name) live in the Jammu Province whose condition is most dilapidated and heart-rending. They are untouchables and are now called Harijans. They are divided into many sub-castes, such as Meghs, Dooms, Chammars. They are largely employed as sweepers, cobblers and labourers. In the villages they are living as landless tenants. No menial work is too low for them. They are looked down upon by both Hindus and Muslims. High class Hindus, especially Rajputs and Brahmins, even now feel polluted by their touch. Their poverty and illiteracy are shocking. Only 8 per thousand of them are literate. The Harijan uplift campaign of Mahatma Gandhi has turned the attention of the progressive Hindus towards them. For all that, only their existence is being acknowledged yet. The Maharaja was good enough to open all State temples to them in 1933, long before Travancore did so, and not without raising a storm of protest. In certain cases of remote parts of the Province, however, the upper class Hindus and orthodox Brahmins do not allow them to enjoy this privilege ; and the royal proc-

lamation did not improve their economic or political lot.

Harijans are the most backward in education. Those who have passed the Matriculation can be counted on finger-tips. Few of them attend schools and therefore the future also is not so bright and hopeful.

A class so down-trodden as Harijans are sure to form a bulwark in the mass movement for which the leaders of the Nationalist Kashmir are preparing the State. But this presupposes an awakening among them. Much constructive work is to be done before they can become conscious enough to take their rightful place in the coming struggle. A number of sincere workers are required who can, whithout any eye on reward, work among these unfortunate beings as belonging to them. At present the national leaders are doing nothing and appear to intend doing nothing for them. This is largely due to the fact that the national movement has not yet taken roots in the Jammu Province. For the present only the Arya Samaj interests itself in the affairs of the Harijans. Politically this may not be an unmixed good. The Harijan Sewak Sang of Gandhiji has begun helping the untouchables, but not considerably.

### (5) Sikhs

The population of the Sikhs in the State is 50,662. They are spread all over the country. In the Kashmir Province most of them are not indigenous people. They were imported in the days of Sikhs and the early period of Dogra rule to maintain

order in the disturbed condition of the Province. In the country-side of the Kashmir entire villages are inhabited by them. Though they have originally been henchmen of the Government, meant to spy over the local population, the Sikhs have proved far-sighted enough to identify themselves gradually with the people of Kashmir. They have learnt their language, followed their customs, and shared their weal and woe.

Sikhs are also a backwad community. Not having had many educated men in the past, they are not adequately represented in the Government Services. Only 13 per cent of them are literate, mostly in Gurmukhi. But they are making tremendous efforts. to make up the deficiency. According to the latest statistical reports cent per cent of the Sikh male population of schoolgoing age is under instruction. Compare this with 26·7 per cent of the Muslims and 11·8 of the Buddhists of the same age.

Sikhs are taking a greater and keener interest in the national cause. Already some of them went to jail in September 1938. The present President of the National Conference is a Sikh.

An average Sikh is much nearer to the Muslim masses than the Hindu middle class people who would like to exploit the Sikhs if they could. At present, however, they are mostly employed as cooks in Hindu homes. Many of them are also peons in the Government offices.

Many Sikhs have an extra-territorial mentality. They believe in the solidarity of the Panth. They bow before the commands of the Central Religious

Organisation at Amritsar. So far as religious affairs are concerned, this might be sound, but in political matters this introduces complicacies. We have already seen how a few non-State subject Sikhs exploited the Sikhs of the soil in 1931 by submitting a demand to the Maharaja Bahadur on their behalf that when local Sikhs are not available outside Sikhs should be employed in Government Services. If national movement is to run smoothly, this extra-territorial mentality in political affairs must come to an end. Happily some of the Sikhs have begun to realise this.

### (6) The Buddhists

The Buddhists of the State number 38,724. They are mostly confined to the Frontier District of Ladakh. Economically they are more backward than even the Harijans. But more of them are literate, having the advantage of learning their native tongue, the Tibetan, in Bodhi script. For a long time the Government thrust Urdu on the Ladakhi Buddhists against their will. They submitted a grievance on this account before the Grievances Enquiry Commission. Tibetan language in the Bodhi script is now being taught in the Government schools.

The Frontier Districts are on the whole steeped in utter darkness and ignorance. "Vast areas are hilly tracts and the land is not fertile; the produce is limited. Consequently people are living very low economic lives. They are extremely poor, ignorant, dirty and superstitious. In places remote from the

main road, flesh of a dead horse is a welcome feast to these hungry beings." * Polyandry is commonly practised by the Buddhists, to restrict the growth of population.

The Buddhists are "cheerful, willing and good-tempered, they are very ready for a laugh; they are not quarrelsome. They are by no means ingenious; simplicity and clumsiness are characteristics of them These men do not jabber and lie, fawn and smile falsely. They are truthful, honest, hospitable and straightforward."

The Buddhist women are socially as free as men and labour under no legal disabilities. They go about unveiled and "mix where men frequent and enter with them into their pursuits of business or pleasure and partake too of their toil." In certain respects women are better than men. "If there be no son, the eldest daughter inherits the land; in this case the Buddhist heiress enjoys a delightfully independent position." No inferiority complex exists among these women, and they are equal partners in the lives of their men-folk in their weal and woe. But their condition changes abruptly if they embrace Islam, which is frequently done in the Ladakh District.

Buddhists, like Harijans, are the most backward in education. Not more than 5 per cent of them are literate, mostly in Tibetan. Only 8 persons know English. Yet, oddly enough, the Government grants only Rs. 2,311 annually jointly to both the

* The *New Burma*, Rangoon, October 4, 1931.

Harijan and Buddhist students against Rs. 3,118 to Sikhs and Rs. 4,306 to Thakars. This is not even good arithmetic; certainly it is not just.

While closed scholarships are awarded to Rajput girls, no such provision has been made for the girls of Buddhists.

Kashmiri Pandits manœuvred to represent the Buddhists in the Glancy Constitutional Reforms Conference. They are now represented by their own men in the Legislature. It may, however, be admitted that but for the spirited presentation of their case by the Kashmiri Pandits, no matter from what motive, it might have gone by default.

### (7) Shias

Some disgruntled Shia politicians have made futile attempts to drive a wedge between the Sunni and Shia sects of the Mohammedans. One communal Hindu journal has been foolish enough to countenance this claim, perhaps hoping thereby to weaken the Muslim front. While it is true that some differences do exist between the Sunnis and the Shias on religious grounds, and the unhappy memories of the loot in 1872 do not allow the Shias to come very near the Sunnis, yet it would be preposterous to suppose that at the time of any crisis of communal nature these two sects will separate from each other.

But the Shias are socially very backward and are terribly exploited by their own religious preachers. The upper classes among them are fanatically *pardah*-ridden. When the local primary school for boys

at Badgam, a place densely populated by Shias, was proposed to be raised to the middle standard, the Agha Sahib (the religious Head of the Shias) raised a hue and cry. He sent alarming telegrams to the authorities asking them not to carry out their intentions. The proposal was dropped in deference to his wishes. But the Shia upper classes are cultured and lovers of personal cleanliness. They are lovers of fine arts too and good at calligraphy, woodwork, needlework, carpet designing and other arts.

### (8) The Domiciled Community

A few thousand non-Kashmiris, chiefly the Punjabis, are living in different parts of the State. They came to the State either as traders or were recruited in Government Services during the reign of Maharaja Partap Singh. At one time they were very influential and wielded enormous political power. The promulgation of the State-subject Definition in 1927 and the disabilities placed on their entrance into Government Service and purchase of immovable property, gave their progress a setback, and their influence was greatly reduced. Some of them continue to be big traders and contractors, but during the past thirteen years their number in State Services has diminished.

Not all non-Kashmiris living in the State are non-State subjects under the provisions of the definition. A by no means small number of them has already acquired the privileges accruing to the hereditary subjects of the Sate. But as no one who

did not permanently settle in the State before 1st Baisakh, Sambat 1847 (13th April, 1885), can become a hereditary State subject, many of them cannot in future, even till the doomsday, enjoy these privileges. They therefore feel disgruntled and have a grievance against the provisions of the Definition, which is considered defective.

With the intention of getting the Definition wrecked many non-Kashmiris did their utmost to give the Kashmir politics a communal turn and, having achieved some success, influenced the local Hindu and Muslim leaders to demand the annulment of the law. But the Glancy Commission refused to countenance the demand. Subsequently a Naturalisation Bill was brought before the Legislature repeatedly in several sessions, but the State-subjects almost unanimously opposed it with the result that the law has remained intact to this day.

By now non-Kashmiris have realised that it is impossible to enjoy the old privileges and powers. They cannot put back the hands of the clock, which they have been attempting to do since 1927. They would feel content if instead of a definite date in the Definition, *viz.*, 31st Chet, Sambat 1846, some period was fixed by the Government for achieving Nationality and its rights in Kashmir. It would appear that this is not an unreasonable demand, and the progressive sections of the people of the State are not against this being granted. But the matter has always been viewed from a sentimental rather than rational point of view. And at the time of discussion Kashmiris have been reminded of the

injustices that the outsiders have certainly done them during the hey-day of their power. Fairness and statesmanship alike demand that the law should be amended in this respect, and the grievance of the non State subjects removed.

## CHAPTER XII.

### The National Conference

A special session of the Jammu and Kashmir Muslim Conference was held at Srinagar on the 10th of June, 1939, under the presidentship of Mr. Ghulam Mohammad Sadiq. It was attended by 176 delegates representing all districts. It had been convened to decide finally whether the name and the constitution of the Conference were to be changed to allow non-Muslims to become members of the Conference. The agitation of September 1938, in which a large number of non-Muslims had taken an active part and gone to jail, had made the decision of the Session a foregone conclusion. Everybody was almost sure about what the verdict of the Conference would be. The resolution which had been adopted by the Working Committee (*see page 194*) was moved in the open Session. Unexpectedly Chaudri Ghulam Abbas, the most prominent leader from the Jammu Province, was half-hearted in giving his support to the resolution. He defended communalism in the same breath in

which he was advocating nationalism. He raised controversial issues in his speech. His lieutenants, notably Chaudri Hamid Ullah, a member of the State Assembly, openly opposed the resolution and considered it ill-conceived, anti-Muslim and premature. They were effectively replied to by progressive delegates. Speeches were made and discussions held among the delegates throughout that night and, when in the morning of the 11th June at about 2 a.m. the resolution was put to vote, it was passed with only 3 delegates opposing the motion. Chaudri Ghulam Abbas supported the resolution while Mr. Hamid Ullah opposed it. Ch. Hamid Ullah subsequently issued a statement to the press saying that though in the Conference he opposed the resolution which was passed by an overwhelming majority, he had full confidence in the leadership of the Conference and was prepared to work as a volunteer. His differences with his colleagues had ended and he would work more earnestly for the national cause in future. Thus the morning of the 11th June sounded the death-knell of the Muslim Conference and heralded the day with the happy news of the birth of the National Conference in its place.

The Conference authorised the Working Committee to co-opt a few prominent non-Muslim workers in all the elected bodies after they had been duly enrolled as primary members of the Conference. Accordingly Sardar Budh Singh, Pandit Jia Lal Kilam, L. Girdhari Lal, Pandit Kashyap Bandhu, and myself were taken in the

Working Committee as members in addition to the already existing members, to give the Committee the appearance of a nationalist body.

The 11th of June was a red-letter day in the history of the State. The great desire of nationalist Kashmir had been fulfilled. It was hoped that the ideological confusion which had been produced in the minds of the rank and file of the Muslim workers by running the movement, (which was essentially and fundamentally political and economic) on religious and communal lines would now be cleared. It was expected that a large number of non-Muslims would join the Conference and take an active part in moulding the destinies of the country. And so they did.

The work of the National Conference was started in right earnest, at any rate, in the Kashmir Province. Most of the workers were serious in the beginning. The Conference had caught the imagination of the thinking people. Educated young men were attracted towards it. Attempts were now made to democratise the organisation by enrolling primary members and by activising the branch Committees in the Districts. The lower strata of society began to come into prominence again, and the prospects of a mass movement on some future day, however distant, appeared to take shape.

During the summer of 1939 brisk preparations were made by the leaders to hold a grand session of the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference at Anantnag. The time had arrived when it was deemed desirable to acquaint the people with the

policy and the programme of the Conference. The Conference was to be held on the the 30th and 31st September and 1st October. The Working Committee and the General Council met some time in advance to discuss the fundamental issues and formulate a programme.

The Conference met on a tastefully decorated Pandal. Delegates from all the districts came to participate in the deliberations. Chaudris Ghulam Abbas and Hamid Ullah also attended it.

The first session of the National Conference passed several resolutions, in one of which it ratified the document known as the National Demand, which was issued by several leaders of Jammu and Kashmir under their own signatures on the 29th of August, 1938. According to it the Conference demanded that the Government of His Highness should be modelled on the following lines :—

(*a*) The present system of administration in the State shall be replaced by Responsible Government subject to the general control and residuary powers of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur as hereinafter mentioned.

(*b*) The Ministry shall be responsible to the Jammu and Kashmir Legislature and shall have, subject to such responsibility, power to control the expenditure of the revenues of the State and also to make such grants and appropriations on any part of those revenues or of any other property which is at present under the control, or disposal of the Council as reserved expenditure, save and except the following which shall remain under the control of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur :—

1. Expenditure on the Military Service.
2. Expenditure classed as Political and Foreign.
3. Payments of all debts and liabilities hitherto lawfully contracted and incurred by His Highness-in-Council on account of Government of Kashmir.
4. The Darmarth Trust.

(*c*) The principle of responsibility to the Legislature shall be introduced in all the branches of administration of the Government subject to general control, reservations and residuary powers vested in His Highness in respect of control of Military, Foreign and Political affairs, etc., provided that the proposal of His Highness for appropriations of any revenues or moneys for Military or other expenditure for Foreign and Political purposes shall be submitted to the vote of the Legislature, but that His Highness shall have power notwithstanding the vote of the Assembly to appropriate up to a fixed maximum any sum His Highness may consider necessary for such expenditure.

(*d*) The Legislature shall consist entirely of members elected by constituencies. founded on the system of adult franchise. Provision should be made for the representation of labour, trade, landlords, and educational interests in the Legislature by means of election.

(*e*) The election to the Legislature shall be made on the basis of joint electorates; seats should be reserved for the minorities, and all safeguards and weightages should be guaranteed to them in the Constitution for the protection of their linguistic, religious, cutural, political and economic rights according to the principles enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time. In addition to the

above the religious rights and sentiments of all the communities should always be respected and not interfered with.

(f) All the subjects of the State, without distinction of creed or caste, shall, be admitted for services in all armies of defence, and for that purpose His Highness shall be assisted by a Minister responsible to the Assembly.

(g) No subject of His Highness shall be liable to suffer in liberty, life, property or of association, of free speech or in respect of writing except under sentence by ordinary Court of Justice and as a result of lawful and open trial.

This resolution was a sort of minimum demand of the Conference, constitutionally put. It also briefly mentioned the fundamental rights of citizenship. What was more, it assured the minorities of the State about the attitude of the Conference towards that most difficult problem of Indian politics, the rights of minorities. By another resolution the Conference decided that the National Flag for Jammu and Kashmir State will be of red colour with a sign of a plough inscribed in its centre.

The European War had broken out a few days earlier. A resolution was passed in which the Conference appreciated the intention underlying the statement issued by the Working Committee of the National Congress about the War and the policy of the British Government towards political aspirations of the Indian nation.

It will be observed that the clause about the minority problem in the National Demand and the resolution about war drove the Conference closer to the Indian National Congress. This was a wise

move, though rather difficult to maintain, for the Muslim members of the Conference in view of their immediate past. The non-Muslim elements in the State generally, and inside the Conference ranks in particular, greatly appreciated this position. For the moment it appeared that the Muslim leaders were strong enough to have the courage to stand by it.

But things were moving rapidly among the Muslims, and in the wrong direction. The Muslim *bourgeoisie* heartily disliked the new orientation that the leaders had given to the politics of the State. From June 1938, when the Working Committee of the Muslim Conference passed a resolution recommending change in the name and constitution of the Conference, they had looked with grave suspicions and doubts on the activities of the leaders. They foresaw that the movement was going out of their hands and there would be little chance for them to oppose the Hindu *bourgeoisie* from this platform. The educated unemployed Muslim young men who had utilised the Conference as the instrument to secure Government jobs for themselves also found that their hopes were fading out. The vigorous propaganda carried on by the Muslim Nationalist leaders against the Muslim employees for being selfish and corrupt forced that class to make common cause with the communalists and the *bourgeoisie.* They now joined hands to annihilate the existing leadership. The force of their opposition was felt even during the course of the prolonged discussions which were held in the meeting of the Working Committee in June 1938. It was very

doubtful whether the resolution passed by the Working Committee would be adopted first by the General Council and then by the Plenary Session of the Conference. But the events that followed made the path of the nationalists easy. The conflict with the forces of the Government which resulted in the imprisonment of large numbers of patriotic young men in September that year sent a wave of enthusiasm throughout the country. Nationalistic sentiments were aroused, and for the time being the communalists had to seal their lips. That more than sixty Pandit young men, most of them highly qualified, and a few Sikh youths had willingly and voluntarily taken an active part in the movement for the achievement of Responsible Government, which, it must be remembered, was still conducted under the auspices of the Muslim Conference, and suffered imprisonment and other hardships was a convincing proof that the time had arrived for joint action on the part of the people of the State without consideration of caste or creed. No sentimentalism of the Muslim communalists could prove of any avail in disproving this fact. And so the resolution of the Working Committee was passed in the Special Session in June 1939, and the name and the constitution of the Conference were changed.

But the communal and reactionary forces in the Muslim community did not entirely die out. The September agitation had demoralised them and for the time being they did not know what to do. Some of them had openly joined the nationalist forces and expiated for their old sins. Others were

waiting for their day.

Soon after the Special Session they regained their lost balance, and under cover of religious fairs, meetings were held at which the rechristening of the Muslim Conference was vehemently denounced. An attack was also made by them on the Mujahid Manzil, the headquarters of the National Conference on 15th June. All sorts of lies were sedulously spread among the Muslims about the intentions and the programme of the National Conference. Unfortunately enough, the entire Muslim press became hostile to the nationalist movement and made the situation worse.

Some unknown Muslim young men backed by Mr. M. A. Hafiz, a member of the Legislative Assembly, formed the local branch of the Muslim League. They have not been able to achieve anything beyond passing resolutions in a closed room "somewhere" in Srinagar.

It was quite evident that if the national movement was to be a success, the Muslim leaders of the Conference should do their utmost to counteract the vicious propaganda carried on by the communalists. It was necessary that the masses should be kept fully informed of the new developments and reminded of the selfishness of the upper classes and the reactionaries. Fortunately, in spite of the best efforts of the communalists, the mass mind was sound and they had every confidence in the leadership of the Conference. But it is greatly to be deplored that the Muslim leaders remained supremely indifferent to it and let the matters take

an adverse turn. It is amazing that no leader, big or small, considered it worth his while to make a tour of all the districts and explain to the Muslims the significance of the change that had been wrought in their politics and how it helped their cause. It is not surprising, therefore, that having been accustomed to religo-political speeches for nine long years, the Muslims in the countryside were confused when they were misinformed by the communalists about the conversion of the Muslim Conference. The activities of the nationalist leaders were confined to the city and two or three of the more important towns.

When Anantnag Session of the Conference adopted the National Demand and passed the resolution about the European War, it gave another handle to the communalists to tell the Muslims that the Conference had become a part of that " Hindu Organisation "—the Indian National Congress. This proved dangerous, not because there was anything really harmful in the Conference becoming a part of the Congress even from Muslim point of view, but because of the trend events had taken in the British Indian politics during a few years past. The rising popularity of Muslim League ideas among the outside Muslim intelligentsia was exploited by the opponents of the Conference in misleading the Muslims of the State. "Are Muslims of Kashmir going to prove traitors to Islam at this critical juncture of the Indian history ? " the communalists asked. Such an appeal to sentiments had its effect. Gradually, imperceptibly but steadily, the Muslim

intellegentsia still with the Conference began to change allegiance. Reaction on a tremendous scale definitely began to set in. The leadership still remained unmoved and felt no necessity of standing on their feet and move. They were so full of self-complacency ?

This was not all. The reaction in the outlook of the Muslims began to produce its effect on some of the Muslim leaders of the Conference themselves. Doubts as to the wisdom of their policy in having changed the Muslim Conference to the National Conference began to toss their mind. Their activities became suspicious and their decisions were often uninspiring. It culminated in a scandalous incident when Maulana Mohammad Syed, the General Secretary of the Working Committee, was publicly accused by a handful of young educated Muslims of complicity in the act of starting a Muslim Conference with their help. The young men complained that he had actively encouraged them behind the scenes to start the communal organisation and promised them not only his own help but that of other leaders of the National Conference as well, but that when the proposal matured, he turned a *volte face* due to the fear of being exposed. They demanded an open enquiry into the General Secretary's conduct which was, however, never held.

In these circumstances non-Muslim members began to feel disgusted, and soon mutual suspicions began to take root. And the Conference showed signs of disintegration and decay.

In order that the Muslim leaders may furnish a

proof of their devotion to Islam they decided to celebrate the Id-i-Milad (the Prophet's birthday) in the month of April, 1940. This day was being celebrated by the Muslim Conference during the early years of its existence, but had been subsequently abandoned. In the hope of catching the imagination of the Muslims the Muslim League announced early in 1940 its resolve to celebrate it. Having already given way to Muslim communalism, the leadership of the National Conference felt afraid. So they also decided to celebrate this day afresh.

On the 11th June, when the Muslim Conference was rechristened, the Muslim leaders founded, with the concurrence of the delegates of the Special Session, a Muslim Trust known as the Auqaf Committee to look after and be in charge of the religious buildings and other property belonging to the Muslim Conference, which could not obviously be inherited by the National Conference. The leading lights of the National Conference are also the principal members of the Trust. It was therefore arranged that the Id-i-Milad observations, which could not be held under the auspices of the National Conference, should be held under the auspices of the Auqaf Committee.

The Id-i-Milad was to be observed on 24th April, 1940. But in order to do some propaganda beforehand, meetings were arranged throughout the city on different days for about two weeks, in which religious discourses were given to the Muslim audiences. Theoretically and constitutionally there could be no objection to these functions, but in

practice they proved harmful as politics and religion got inextricably mixed together in the National Conference, with bad results. In one of those meetings Mr. S. M. Abdullah, President of the Conference, made an unwise remark that Islam was the sun while all other religions were stars, implying thereby that when the sun appeared stars could not be seen. Unfortunately an official version of the speech containing this statement was issued by the General Secretary of the Conference in his capacity as the Secretary of the Auqaf Committee and could not therefore be easily repudiated. The remark incensed the non-Muslim public in general, and the Hindu leaders of the Conference felt embarrassed and displeased. The function itself turned out to be a brilliant success. The meeting of the Muslim League held a couple of days earlier proved a dismal failure. To their great disappointment, communalist Muslims found that the leadership of the National Conference continued to hold sway over the majority of the Muslims.

But this success was dearly bought. Was it worth having? The Communalist Muslims were defeated; but what of that? The Nationalist Muslims who had started going back to their communal ways became themselves almost wholly communalist. Reaction thoroughly set in, and for them the National Conference was henceforth national only in name.

Information reached Srinagar that by the end of April Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru was visiting Kashmir. This was an important event in the his-

tory of the country. Nehru is a Kashmiri Pandit and was coming to the land of his forefathers. It was decided that he should be given a right royal reception. And what a reception it was! Never before in the annals of Kashmir has any Viceroy, much less any other visitor, been received in such a right royal manner. Princes would envy such an honour.

But there was a serious rift in the Working Committee on this auspicious occasion. On 28th April, while consultations were in progress about the reception, questions were put to Mr. Abdullah about his speeches delivered in connection with Id-i-Milad celebrations. Exception was taken to his remarks about the comparative greatness of Islam. In anger Mr. Abdullah admitted that he was " Muslim first and Muslim afterwards," a statement which his non-Muslim colleagues desired to be replaced by his being Muslim and Indian at the same time. Hot words were uttered on either side. Silence. * * * *

Next day the Reception Committee met to elect their President and other office-bearers. There was again some misunderstanding about these elections. The misunderstanding was not serious in itself, but the background made it so. On 30th of April Pandits Jia Lal Kilam and Kashyap Bandhu, two leading Kashmiri Pandit members of the Working Committee, resigned not only from the Committee but the Conference itself. The effect that their departure from the Conference would have produced was lost in the din and bustle of Nehru's arrival. At the moment both of them

were condemned and their ill-advised action adversely criticised. Though there is no doubt that they acted hastily, it is unfair to judge them by the isolated action. They were forced to take the step by the oppressive communal atmosphere which was daily increasing inside the circles of the Conference. Those who did not know the real facts misjudged them.

Pandit Jawahar Lal toured Kashmir for ten days. He was the honoured guest of the National Conference. His speeches which were delivered at different centres and to different audiences produced a profound impression on the minds of the people. Kashmiri Pandits were moved by his appeals. To Hindus in general his advice gave food for thought. Muslims saw that, unlike the Muslim League leaders, the Congress leaders advocated the cause of freedom and upliftment of the poor in every part of India, whether that helped Hindus or Muslims. However unpalatable his opinion might have been to Hindus, Pandit Jawahar Lal did not hesitate saying that the time was fast approaching when there would be popular Government in Kashmir.

Had the National Conference been free from internal dissensions, the leaders could have derived an immense advantage out of the effect produced by Jawahar Lal's visit. At the time of his departure everyone appeared keen on becoming a member of the Conference. The Conference itself appeared to be in the highest heaven. But, amazing as it may seem, within a week's time the dissension

started again.

Realising the impotency of the Conference leadership, the Muslim communalists made a grievance out of Jawahar Lal's visit by saying that the Conference had entirely identified itself with that " Hindu Body, " the Congress, a thing that the nationalist Muslims were now careful to disown. Chaudri Ghulam Abbas, who had been wavering in his ways and undecided in his mind all along about nationalism, tendered his resignation from the Conference without assigning any reasons.

It was quite evident that the Conference had lost energy and its spell was broken. In these circumstances when its second Session met at Baramulla on 28th September 1940, all the delegates to the Conference were nominated as only a small number of primary members had been enrolled during the course of the year. No Muslim delegates attended from the Jammu Province, except Mirpur district. It was an agreeable surprise to find that a large contingent of Hindu and Sikh delegates had come from all over the State and even from Jammu. The elements did not favour the Baramulla Session : there were incessant rains and most of the proceedings had to be held inside in a hall.

Some radical resolutions were passed by the Conference which need a mention. According to one of them it was laid down that " no scheme of Responsible Government would be acceptable to the nation in which the tillers of the soil are not allowed to enjoy the fullest fruits of their labour ;

for this there can be no other way than that those alone should possess and own the soil who till it." As a measure of immediate relief the Conference demanded the introduction of the principle of progression in land revenue system guaranteeing the peasant (*a*) exemption of means of subsistence from the tax and (*b*) lower rates of tax on smaller agricultural incomes. Another resolution recognised the pressing nature of rural indebtedness and said that, in cases where the principal had been paid back by the debtors in the shape of interest, no further demand should be made. The resolution assured the debtors that " when a Government responsible to the people comes into existence, all such debts would be lawfully liquidated." By another resolution the immediate establishment of a department to effectively watch all the interests of labour was demanded from the Government.

Ordinarily these resolutions would have created a stir in the country and the upper classes would have taken a fright. By adopting the red flag with the sign of plough inscribed in its middle, the Conference had already shown to which side it was moving. These resolutions were a further indication of its tendencies. But those whom this policy of the National Conference would have affected, considered it a mere bluff and the Government did not value it more than a joke.

As I write these lines I feel a particular responsibility in having been the chief mover of these resolutions. I was serious in moving the Conference to adopt a radical programme and had

thought that by doing so we might be able to extricate the organisation from the meshes of communalism by enlisting mass support. I had thought that we might be able to free ourselves of the degrading controversies about petty problems, such as the distribution of Government Services, by raising discussions about big national problems of the masses which the land problem and rural indebtedness unquestionably are. But I was grossly mistaken. Even while moving the resolution about the distribution of land, I realised that I was wrong as nobody, not even the delegates who owned big landed property, considered it worth their while to oppose or amend it. In spite of my implorings that serious thought should be bestowed on its revolutionary nature, the resolution was passed unanimously. I was deeply mortified at my success as it did not take me long to realise what little gravity was being attached to the decisions of the Conference by the workers themselves.

In this I was not far from right. A few days after the Baramulla Session, the Government issued their orders on the recommendations of an official committee which they had set up two years before for the reorganisation of the educational system then prevalent in the State. While dealing with the medium of instruction in the schools the Government ordered :—

"The language should be a common one, *viz.* simple Urdu. But for reading and writing, both the Devanagri Script and the Persian Script should have equal recognition. The text

**books to be used in imparting instructions in the various subjects should be same but printed in both scripts."**

**" Pupils attending a school should be at liberty to choose to use either of the two scripts for reading and writing.**

**" Teachers employed in schools which have, or are likely to have, a fixed minimum strength of children to learn each of the two recognised scripts should know both scripts. This minimum strength is fixed at 15 per cent of the total average strength on the rolls of the schools."**

**" Teachers who are already employed in schools, which require both scripts but who are not acquainted with one of them should learn to the satisfaction of a prescribed authority within a period of one year. No person will be appointed to the post of a teacher in any such school in the future unless he knows to read and write both scripts or if he does not know both scripts he shall not be confirmed in his post unless, within a period of one year of his appointment, he learns to read and write satisfactorily the script with which he is not already familiar."**

These orders are unexceptionable. They are not only the soundest and best but are in conformity with the true principles of nationalism and democracy. They have a value because of the principle of self-determination which they allow in the matter of the choice of script to all sections of the people living in the State, the minorities incidentally. But they are a departure from the existing position in the schools. The medium of instruction in the schools at present is Persian script to which Hindus almost as one man take objection. Time and again they have demanded that the medium of instruction for their boys in the Government schools should be Hindi. The question was

raised on the floor of the Kashmir Assembly repeatedly for several years. The demand was reasonable, but the Government, afraid of Muslim communalism, tried to avoid it in the beginning. When it became irresistible after some time, the above orders were issued. It is intersting to note that a resolution of the Working Committee of the National Conference which was passed in a meeting held at Mirpur on the 28th of December, 1939, encourged the Government to come to this decision. According to that resolution the Committee " strongly resented exclusion of the recognised court language of the State, *viz*, Hindustani from the list of both compulsory and optional subjects prescribed for the Kashmir Civil Service Gazetted Examination," and " strongly urged its inclusion as one of the compulsory subjects, *facility to be given to the candidates to use either Persian or Devanagari script as they like*." (Italics mine)

Commenting on these orders of the Government the *Statesman* of Delhi wrote in its issue of November 21, 1940 :—

" Kashmir Government has by a recent order directed that the language of text-books to be used in its schools must be " simple Urdu. " No other language is recognised. They are however to be printed in both Urdu and Devanagri Scripts which are to have equal recognition for reading and writing. This seems a sensible order. Simple Urdu may not be easy to define but it stands for something about which no mistake is likely to be made. It was the right language to choose in a State whose people are predominantly Muslim. Two sets of text-books in two separate languages would have complicated matters

**without benefiting the Hindus who live in Kashmir. These we imagine are no strangers to simple Urdu. Linguistic consciousness in Northern India is on the whole more sensitive about script than about diction and it was wise to sanction both scripts. Even those who pay attention to diction as Hindus or as Muslims, may find in simple Urdu much that is free from controversy."**

The Government orders were not liked by the communal Muslims. They thought it to be an opportune moment to make an assault on the nationalists and finish them. The provisions of the Government orders were misreported. It was stated that Muslims would be forced to read Hindi in future. Irresponsible and inflammatory speeches were made in certain Muslim quarters to excite the Muslims. An attempt was made by a number of Muslim workers to revive the Muslim Conference and a manifesto was issued on 1st October 1940 under the signatures of some communalist workers. It was decided that the annual session of the resurrected Muslim Conference might be held at Kotli at the end of November under the presidentship of Chaudri Ghulam Abbas. No such session was, however, held at all.

Nationalist Muslims became desperate now. Having given way once and gone on the wrong path of communalism to counteract communalism, nothing appeared to them more efficacious to deal with the situation than to forestall the communalists. The Muslim members of the Working Committee therefore issued statements, delivered speeches and passed resolutions vigo-

rously condemning Government orders. It is not surprising that remarks casting aspersions on Hindus were also made in these exclusive Muslim gatherings which were mostly held in the premises of the mosques. All this was done before the Working Committee Members had an opportunity to discuss the matter amongst themselves and the opinion of the non-Muslim members could be ascertained. These colleagues were not consulted even informally.

While matters were taking such a course outside, worse things were happening inside the State Assembly. General elections to the Assembly were held in August 1938, when the Muslim Conference was still alive. The Conference was able to win 19 out of 21 Muslim seats in the elections. But subsequently, when the Conference adopted a national programme, some of these members led by Ch. Hamid Ullah severed their connection with the Conference Party. In their meeting, which was held at Mirpur on the 28th of December, the Working Committee arrived at the decision that " if the activities of the remaining 13 members are carried on in an efficient, disciplined and well-organised manner, it is bound to prove helpful in the struggle for the achievement of Responsible Government in the State." A Sub-Committee of 5 members, with M. Mohammad Afzal Beg as its President, was formed to " help, guide, and supervise the party in the Legislative Assembly which is composed of the members who believe

in the goal of the National Conference and are prepared to follow their mandates issued from time to time." The party of 13 members was therefore owned by the National Conference.

On 28th October Ch. Hamid Ullah moved a cut motion in the Assembly, when general discussions on the State Budget for the next year were being held, to "discuss the preponderance of the Kashmiri Pandits in State Services" Ch. Hamid Ullah wanted to place the National Party in the wrong. He wanted to create bitterness between the Pandits and the Party. And he was brilliantly successful in this. To the amazement of all, the Conference Party supported the cut motion and one of its members, Maulvi Ghulam Mustafa, made very wild and reckless charges against the Pandit community as a whole in the course of his speech. Naturally this raised a storm of protest in the Pandit circles and their press. Next day, while making a speech in some other connection, Mr. Mustafa made a staggering admission in the House that he had been prompted to make the tirade against the Pandits by the Muslim Revenue Commissioner who was sitting opposite to him on the Treasury Benches. That gentleman, however, lost no time in repudiating the charge. Obviously, if his admission was correct, Mr. Mustafa had flouted the authority of the Party and the Parliamentary Sub-Committee by these consultations behind the scenes. He had made the National Conference a laughing-stock

of the world. If it was incorrect, he was a liar. Subsequently a correspondence between myself and the President, Parliamentary Sub-Committee, was released to the press, which made it clear that the decision to support the cut motion had been arrived at by the Party after they had consulted the President, who considered such an approach to the matter " in conformity with the ideal of the National Conference and true principles of nation alism !" It is interesting to note that the Working Committee had in their resolution of the 29th of December, 1939, given clear instructions to the Sub-Committee that " nothing should be done inside the Legislative Assembly by members individually or the Party jointly which in any way *directly* or *indirectly* harms the cause for which the National Conference stands."

But this was not all. In this session of the Assembly the leader of the Conference Party, Mian Ahmad Yar, brought an adjournment motion to discuss the Government orders about the medium of instruction above referred to, implying thereby that these orders were harmful. Mian Ahmad Yar knew that Hindus had welcomed the orders and, although it would serve no useful purpose to discuss it, some bad blood would necessarily be created. Happily the motion was not admitted by the President of the Assembly. Again Mian Ahmad Yar, on behalf of his Party, supported a resolution moved by another member, not belonging to the Party, putting on record the appreciation of the House

for the good work which Sir Abdus Samad, a non-State Subject Development Minister of the Government, who was to retire from service, had done during his period of Ministership in the State. Only a year ago this estimable leader of the Party had stated, when a resolution of congratulations to His Highness was before this very House at the time of the appointment of K. B. Mohammad Afzal Khan, a state subject, as Home Minister, that the Party could not support it, being committed to the ideal of Responsible Government. The inconsistency was glaring. According to the instructions of the Working Committee "the Parliamentary Sub-Committee was to guide the Party in such a way and make it work in such a manner that the hollowness of the present Constitution was demonstrated in a most effective manner." Well-demonstrated indeed!

Yet another matter, though a trivial one, showing the incompetence of the Party. It was considered desirable that owing to pressure of work the Assembly should sit till late in the afternoon. These were the days of Ramadan fasts. The Muslim members rightly resented this and wanted early adjournment. The President was ill-advised to insist on his decision. Of all the Muslim members in the House the leader of the Nationalist Party charged him with being a bigoted Hindu; as if there was no other charge to level against him for this action of his; as if Mian Ahmad Yar could not tell him that he was unfair and narrow-minded.

The nationalist elements in the country greatly deplored the trend that the politics of the Conference was taking. It is not surprising that a large number of sincere workers were disappointed and became indifferent. Articles and statements appeared in the pro-Conference press slashingly criticising this policy and warning the leaders of its inevitable dangerous results. A meeting of the Working Committee was therefore convened on the 28th of November in Srinagar to discuss the matters. After prolonged discussions it was decided that the orders of the Government regarding the medium of instruction in schools were "ill-conceived, mischievous, and definitely anti-national," and therefore they strongly condemned them. The Committee turned down even my suggestion that the Government might be asked to make the knowledge of both the scripts compulsory for all students whether Muslim or non-Muslim, which I believed was an alternative in many respects better than what the Government had decided to do. As regards the "cut motion" and the attitude the Conference Party adopted towards it, the members did not consider it worth their while to do anything in the matter and declared the Parliamentary Board competent enough to deal with it. These were most disappointing decisions.

It was clear that the Working Committee had ceased to be a nationalist body. The members had laid themselves open to the charge of inconsistency and had certainly forgotten even their immediate past. Their integrity became very doubtful.

The "National Demand" and the Mirpur resolutions were reduced to mere scraps of paper. In these circumstances it was very difficult to shoulder the responsibility of being a member of the Working Committee. After some tormentingly sleepless nights and painful days, and with a heavy heart, I resigned from the membership of the Committee. Commenting on the decisions of the Committee, the *Tribune* of Lahore in its issue dated the 29th of November said:

"We are not at all surprised that the script controversy has caused a rift in the ranks of the Kashmir National Conference. The attitude that the Conference or rather its Muslim members, who happen to be in an overwhelming majority in it, has taken up in this matter, is not only inconsistent with its professions of nationalism but has created feelings in the minds of non-Muslims that they cannot expect justice from the Conference Party in the matter of safeguarding their linguistic and cultural interests. The result is that the already few non-Muslims who are in the National Conference are one by one severing their connection with it.........And what the Kashmir Government had done is to give recognition to both Devanagri and Persian scripts while keeping Urdu as the medium of instruction in educational institutions. Is there anything wrong or unreasonable in this act of Government? Was it not its duty to do so to satisfy the legitimate demand of the minority Community? If anybody could have any grievance, it was the Hindus, because the Government, while conceding to them the right of having their children educated through the Devanagri script, still kept Urdu as the medium of instruction. But unfortunately it was left to the Muslim members of the National Conference Party, who were least expected to raise a controversy on this issue, to read a meaning into the official order which it did not convey."

Adverting to the matter again in its issue of the

9th December, the journal wrote :—

"At its annual session held at Anantnag, the Jammu and Kashmir National Conference adopted a resolution, embodying what is popularly termed as 'National Demand.' This 'National Demand' guaranteed to the minorities 'all the safeguards and weightages for protection of their legitimate, linguistic, religious, cultural, political and economic rights according to the principles enunciated, accepted or acted upon by the Indian National Congress from time to time.' Do the Muslim members of the Conference stand by that 'National Demand'? If so, may we enquire if their attitude on the script question is consistent with the assurance contained in the "Demand"? The Congress while accepting Hindustani as *lingua franca* for India, has given equal recognition to both the Devanagri and the Persian scripts. Why would the members of the National Conference hesitate to recognise both the scripts, especially when Urdu, according to the Kashmir Government orders, will remain the medium of instruction in educational institutions?"

The writer of these lines, however, did not know that the Muslim members of the Working Committee had taken it into their head to fight the communalist Muslims by becoming communalists themselves! In that lay the source of this trouble. The present politics of the Muslims in the State is entirely in the hands of the middle and upper classes. They are at the back of the Muslim press. They support the Muslim workers and give them their ideas. The communalist leaders are entirely under their sway. But they are not popular among the masses. So long as the nationalist Muslim leaders served these classes satisfactorily the latter backed them up, supported them and acknowledged them as their leaders. But as soon as it appeared that they were losing their hold on them and the Conference was devoted more

and more to larger interests of the country, which it undoubtedly had been since 1937, the middle and upper classes hastened to withdraw their patronage. The logical course for the Muslim leaders of the Conference should have been to approach the masses, produce more intimate contact with them and bring them back in larger numbers under the banner of the national movement. Then they would have been strong enough to withstand the intrigues and machinations of the upper classes. The support of the masses would have proved the strongest bulwark of the movement. But, as we have seen, no attempt was made to do so, with the result that the National Conference is weakening day by day. The Muslim leaders who, one and all, themselves belong to the middle classes are anxious to placate the members of their own class, and their problems appear to them more important, compared with which the national problems have become insignificant. It is thus easy to understand why the Muslim members of the National Conference have in utter disregard of their ideal made themselves responsible for certain embarrassing positions. The more they are involving themselves in the politics of the upper classes the more communal they are destined to become in their outlook, and the farthest will they recede from their goal. Ultimately, by constantly following this path, they shall have either completely to be communalistic in outlook and give up the historic revolutionary mission of achieving complete Responsible Government or commit political suicide and be subservient to the communalistic

elements in the country. For the moment, it appears, they are going fast in this direction. Only a miracle can save them. The absurdity of the position taken up by the nationalist Muslims with regard to the medium of instruction in schools became evident from the plea that Sir Abdul Qadir advanced in the course of his presidential address to the second All-India *Urdu* Conference held at Cawnpore on December 26th. In his opinion Urdu and Hindustani were synonymous and there was no difference between them. Regarding the controversy of script, the President said that Urdu script was best suited, but advised that "the controversy on this point should not be prolonged and it should be made optional for the people to adopt whichever of the two scripts— Devanagri and Urdu—they liked,"—exactly what the orders of the Kashmir Government said. But the Muslim nationalists stubbornly held their ground and persistently refused to retrace the wrong step.

The chief reason which is mainly responsible for this tragedy is the lack of intellectuals in the Conference ranks. No one, not even those who constitute the High Command of the Conference, take the trouble of analysing the forces that are working in the country and giving shape to her politics. I am sure none of them knows that they are the victims of class interests. They speak in the name of the masses, while the masses have long abandoned them. They have the temerity to revile and inveigh against the upper and middle classes while they are fighting for them. Amazing self-deception!

Most of the members of the Working Committee do not consider it necessary to read a daily newspaper, and most of them hardly read a book throughout the whole course of a year. Much less does any of them write or discuss an article on the burning problems of the day.

Sardar Budh Singh, an old man of fifty-seven, is the present President of the National Conference. He is the oldest of all the members. In fact he is the only eminent leader above forty-five years of age. He is saintly in dress and demeanour, a very simple man. He wears *khaddar* and lives mostly on fruit and milk. He is devoted to the cause of nationalism and is a passionate follower of Mahatma Gandhi and the Congress. He has the courage of his convictions. He is a nationalist at heart, and I have found him mostly non-communal in his ideas and actions. He was a Wazir Wazarat (Deputy Commissioner) in Government service but voluntarily retired from service before his superannuation age, to serve the people. He was arrested for his activities before 1931 and interned in the Bahu Fort. He joined the national movement in 1936 and was imprisoned in the agitation of September 1938. Government confiscated his well-earned pension, but he has never regretted the loss.

Sardar Budh Singh is a Sikh of a religious bent of mind, but he is not a fanatic or a bigot. He is very suspicious by nature and questions the sincerity of almost all the Hindu workers. He is desirous of enjoying as great an honour in the public life of the State as Gandhiji does in British India and, for that

reason, he loves to be called a Tyagi and a Mahatma. He is both, to some extent. He has written several unimportant books and pamphlets on rural upliftment, mostly giving his own experiences and events in life.

By far the most important of all the Conference leaders is Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah, the man who has been the chief hero of the Kashmir movement and has been primarily responsible for the politics of the State during several years in the past. It would be no exaggeration to say that Sheikh Abdullah is the National Conference. Many legends came to be woven round his personality when he was at the zenith of his fame. At one time he was the most respected man among the Muslims, who conferred on him the title of "The Lion of Kashmir." I have seen people kiss the hand that touched his body. He was often mobbed by his devotees and at times had a narrow escape on such occasions. No one in the history of Kashmir has enjoyed so much popularity with the masses as he.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah was born in 1905 at Suwara, a village which is at a distance of only four miles from Srinagar. His parents died when he was a boy and he was brought up by his elder brothers. The family occupation was trade, and his father was a shawl merchant. But, like one of his elder brothers, young Abdullah was educated for some suitable Government job. He got his M.Sc. degree from the Muslim University, Aligarh, in 1930 and soon after found himself in the whirlpool of Kashmir politics.

Mr. Abdullah has made supreme sacrifices for

the national cause. Unlike so many of his earlier Muslim colleagues, he disdained to use his political influence for building his future career. When he could have easily become a high official of the Government if he had desired to become one, he chose to be a humble worker for his down-trodden countrymen. The nobility of his character will be valued very highly when one knows that all along he lived a poor life with no income except the small monetary help that his brothers continued to give him out of their earnings from the family trade. Sheikh Abdullah even denied himself the well-deserved membership of the Legislature, to which he could have been elected unopposed from any Muslim constituency in Kashmir. This supreme self-abnegation was really commendable and raised him in the estimation of all.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah started his political career as a communalist. But he displayed a marvellous capacity to carry the Muslims on a path of progress. In this he had to face tremendous difficulties of great magnitude, but he proved equal to the task. His courage in changing the outlook of the Muslim politics was amazing. The conversion of a communal organisation, lock, stock and barrel, into a national body is unparalleled in contemporary politics, and will remain a unique feat in the political history of Kashmir.

It is not easy to compress the description of Mr. Abdullah's personality in a few paragraphs like this ; but for want of space there is no alternative.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is six feet four

inches. As a friend he is very lovable and sociable. He has no false sense of prestige; and when his pocket did not allow him to maintain a car, he began to ride a bicycle.

But Mr. Abdullah has proved a great disappointment to his intellectual and progressive colleagues in the National Conference. He is a hater of books and no admirer of intellectual movements. Believe it or not but this is a fact that he has not read any history of Kashmir. When in July 1940 a few friends formed a society at Srinagar under the presidentship of Miss Mahmuda Ahmad Ali, a talented young Muslim lady, to promote free thinking and free exchange of ideas on scientific lines as also to inculcate the habit of reading progressive literature and encourage research into the history of Kashmir, Mr. Abdullah jeered at it. "I am no believer in democracy nor constitutional ways of doing things," he told me more than once to my amazement, and he actually exasperated some of his colleagues by acting unconstitutionally in several cases, thereby reducing the internal democracy of the organisation to a farce. Surprising as it may seem, Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah has no ideas and opinions of his own. For them he mostly depends on those who surround him for the time being. But once he has taken up sides, he becomes almost fanatical in popularising the same. Environment produces a tremendous influence on his mind, and it will be sheer good luck for Kashmir if he is placed in healthier political environment and is surrounded by wise counsellors. Recently he has come under the

influence of certain notorious Muslims members of the Conference, who are reported to be nationalist by day and communalist by night.

This susceptibility to outside influence makes Abdullah inconsistent when honestly he means no inconsistency. Some people, not making allowance for this weakness of his, have considered him undependable in his ways and doubted his integrity.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah has been from the very beginning of his career very unfortunate in the choice of his colleagues. Most of his Muslim lieutenants are not nationalists by conviction. They are mostly afraid of him, as without his active support their influence in the community is next to nothing. But some of them speak freely against him behind his back. He found one or two of them actually intriguing for his downfall.

Mr. Abdullah is a devoted Musalman and believes that much of his success has been due to the fact that he has been a true follower of Islam. In politics he is not sure where he is. He is tossed between communalism and nationalism and, oddly enough, sometimes even professes to be a socialist and gives a sermon to his audience on the subject of "Haves and Have-nots." He is a good mob-orator, though his speeches are not always responsible and balanced. He can indeed get angry in public and denounce and threaten and abuse like any dangerous demagogue. He hardly cares for facts and figures and, therefore, at times, comes to grief. Only last year some of his Muslim colleagues obtained his consent to an amazingly irresponsible memorial sub-

mitted to the Kashmir Government regarding the affairs of the Srinagar Municipality. When the incorrectness of the facts and figures given in the document was brought home to him, he felt perturbed and sorry for having given his consent to it.

Sheikh Abdullah showed a marvellous aptitude for progress till 1939, but when, soon after the formation of the National Conference, Muslim upper classes became vociferous, it appears that his faculty for further growth deadened and decay set in. The indifference of his Muslim colleagues, and his own, towards the intellectual side of the movement is mainly responsible for this set-back. Much of the immediate future of Kashmir politics depends on what attitude Sheikh Abdullah adopts. Unfortunately at the moment he has taken a wrong course. His speech at Pathar Masjid on the last Id day was reminiscent of his earlier public career, when he spoke as a communalist Muslim politician and a rival of Mir Waiz Usuf Shah. Some observations in the speech have been astounding. Imagine Sheikh Abdullah the democrat attacking certain individual Muslims for not keeping the fasts during Ramadan and suggesting to them not to court scandal by taking meals openly in a hotel but to do so stealthily, forgetting that he was encouraging the practice of hypocrisy.

Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah is increasingly coming under the influence of the communalists and upper classes of Muslims. No one can say definitely if they will be able to reclaim him wholly and utilise his popularity and influence to fight the communal-

ists and the upper classes among the Hindus as they are frantically trying to do. He is not a reactionary by nature, and therefore the hope that he might regain his powers of progress, is not totally a forlorn one. But if he does not, there is no doubt that the nationalist movement in Kashmir will receive a temporary set-back.

The task before the National Conference is a tedious one. The path is beset with manifold difficulties. Only a confirmed nationalist with a broad vision and a large heart can guide the movement successfully. The work requires unlimited patience and tact. The leaders must possess the uncommon qualities of true statesmanship and diplomacy. It must be admitted in fairness to its critics that all these qualities are not in evidence in the present leadership of the National Conference. I know most of them will hotly resent this remark. But, nonetheless, I know that it is so.

"What's in a name?" wrote the *Civil and Military Gazette* of Lahore when the name of the Muslim Conference was changed into the National Conference. And, to be frank, the National Conference is only national in name now; some of the very members of the Working Committee are arch communalists at heart. It has been my misfortune to hear from them that nationalism is another name for communalism and that the Indian National Congress itself practises communalism under the garb of nationalism.

The limited knowledge of world affairs, the amazing ignorance of history, the total indifference

towards the growth of intellectualism and, last but not least, the absence of clear and independent thinking are the causes which have led the Conference High Command to come to such a pass. The vision of most of the members is blurred, and they are carried off their feet by petty problems which become very big in their eyes at the moment. They lose sight of their goal and sacrifice the important ssues which really matter.

But whether Abdullah remains with the movement or not, whether the present Muslim leaders of the Conference develop the traits of real statesmanship or continue to bungle with the Revolutionary Movement for the emancipation of the people, the Kashmir movement is bound to grow. This struggle is no respecter of personalities. It is the creation of economic and political causes. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah and other leaders are its creatures. It gave birth to them and not they to it. If we become unfit to carry on this historic mission till the goal is reached, the movement can produce new leaders.

The biggest hurdle in the path of progress at present is the self-interest of the middle and upper classes of the Muslims. As it comes into direct conflict with the vested interests of the middle and upper classes of the Hindus, the matter often takes a communal turn. The Muslim communalists, as we have seen, wanted to utilise the mass energy to fight the Hindus. As a matter of fact they have not only been eminently successful in this by snatching a portion of Government jobs from non-Muslim hands, but have also secured many demands from the

Government and shared them with the upper and middle classes of the non-Muslims. If we study the conditions closely and calmly, the freedom of press and platform, the Legislative Assembly, and such other amenities that were granted as a result of the mass uprising of 1931, are being enjoyed not by the masses who rendered supreme sacrifices for them, but by the middle and upper classes who have money and are educated enough to derive advantages from them. The condition of the masses economically and otherwise has changed, if at all, for the worse. Even the grant of the right of proprietorship of land has entailed great miseries, in many cases, as a large portion of land has gone out of the hands of poor peasants.

The middle and upper classes of Muslims want to repeat the history of 1931. When they speak about the Muslim rights, they mean nothing more than the interests of their own class. They like to make us believe that a few thousand of them are synonymous with the entire Muslim community. Any National Conference worthy of its name will disillusion them and keep itself entirely free from their influence. Time will come when they will have to join hands with the middle and upper classes of the non-Muslims against the masses. This will happen when the National Conference becomes strong enough with the support of the lower classes, as soon as they are awakened. Let but the present uneven position of the Hindu and Muslim upper classes be rectified, and matters will quickly take this shape.

But a caution is needed. I have written so strongly

and in detail about the machinations of the middle and upper classes of the Muslims. This is so because I find that they want to sabotage the National Movement. It must be noted that the middle and upper classes of the Hindus are no less mischievous. Obviously they are not so influential in the National Conference; but they are powerful in the Government. Their only anxiety is to see that they are in no way dispossessed of their vested interests. No National Conference appears nationalist to them if it does not allow them to continue to have what they have. They want the *status quo* to be maintained. They have various organisations in the country to speak for them. The National Conference need not countenance their unreasonable demands. In a conflict between the upper classes of the Hindus and the Muslims we must show firmness and uphold principles of justice. But we must always remember that it is a passing phase of our politics and never get totally absorbed in it. Theoretically it appears very easy; but in actual practice it has taxed the patience and wisdom of the best amongst us. The barque of nationalism has recently floundered on the rock of this problem.

# CHAPTER XIII

## The Press

At the time of the mass uprising in 1931 freedom of the press did not exist in the State and consequently no newspapers of any sort could be published. After persistent refusals made in the beginning for several years, a special permission with awkward conditions attached to it was granted to a public-spirited Dogra young man, L. Mulk Raj Saraf, to start a weekly (the *Ranbir*) from Jammu in June 1924. It was really enterprising of Mr. Saraf that the journal was run for about six years in spite of great difficulty. According to the admission of a very high Government official, the *Ranbir* has been most moderate in its views. But its moderation did not help it when in May 1930 it published in its special edition, dated the 7th May, the proceedings of a big procession which was taken out in Jammu on the arrest of Mahatma Gandhi. " His Highness was upset to find that his people were interfering in the affairs of British India " and was afraid that it was a breach of treaty obligations, according to

which he could not " countenance or permit any political demonstration within his territory against the British Government. "

Evidently the holding of the demonstration was no fault of L. Mulk Raj, but His Highness accused the *Ranbir* of having given unnecessary prominence to an affair with which his people had no concern. He also said that the report of the proceedings was " highly malicious and grossly misleading so far as the intentions and the policy of His Highness and his Government and the conduct of his police in relation to the demonstrations in question were concerned." It is amusing to read the part of the report to which His Highness took exception in his order dated May 9, 1930 :—

" 1. His Highness controlled the situation by his statesmanship and keen insight.

" 2. Everywhere it was being said that His Highness issued instructions that so long as the procession was non-violent no interference should be made.

" 3. The City Inspector of Police and one Sub-Inspector came to the students and inviting their leaders argued that when a sufficient demonstration had already been made, they should disperse.

"4. Students raised slogans in every part of the city and cried " Maharaja Bahadur Ki Jai."

"5. The whole atmosphere was resounding with national slogans and simultaneously the slogan " Maharaja Bahadur Ki Jai " was also raised."

All this was indeed seditious and disloyal ! The publication of the *Ranbir* was ordered to be stopped immediately.

In issuing the order banning publication of

the "most moderate" solitary journal, His Highness said :

**"It is not my intention to curb in any way the legitimate expression of opinion or fair and just criticism of the policy and acts of myself and my Government. The policy regarding these matters will continue unchanged and I shall be quite willing to entertain applications whether in Jammu or in Kashmir from other journalists wishing to start another newspaper or newspapers within the State territory so long as their *bona fides* are not in question."**

I had applied for permission to start a paper on 13th September, 1926. After a lapse of four years I was in reply told by the District Magistrate of Kashmir on 10th September, 1930, to submit a fresh application. I did so. So did many others. But, unfortunately, no one could be found by the Government in the whole country whose *bona fides* were not in question, and no permission could therefore be granted. It was clear that the birthright of the freedom of press had to be struggled for. No autocratic Government ever gave it willingly to the people.

"There is hardly any public opinion in the State. As regards the press, it is practically non-existent, with the result that the Government is not benefited to the extent that it should be by the impact of healthy criticism." Sir Albion said this in 1929 while the *Ranbir* was alive and kicking. The effect of his observations on the Kashmir Government was visible next year in 1930, when it suppressed this single weekly in spite of its most moderate views. As yet, when there was a gigantic rising in 1931, it was sur-

prised that people should have been so ungrateful as to forget "the amenities and the concessions" that the generous Government had of its own accord granted to them.

In the course of his report on the inquiry into the disturbances at Jammu and its environments during the first week of November 1931, Mr. L. Middleton writes:—

> "Another cause for disturbance may be found in the absence of any public press within the State......the absence of any means of providing accurate news to the public was certainly contributory to the disturbance."

According to the commands of His Highness dated the 12th November, 1931, Mr. B. J. Glancy had been asked "to submit a report as to how the then existing regulations with regard to matters such as establishment of societies and associations, public meetings and the press, should be modified as to bring the State legislation into conformity with the law prevailing in British India."

Accordingly he submitted a report containing his recommendations, and a Press Law analogous to the one prevailing in British India was promulgated in May 1932. Soon after journals began to be issued from important cities and towns in the State. That the Press Law could be suspended at any moment with the fiat of the executive authority was proved by the action of the District Magistrate of Kashmir, when on 31st of May, 1933, he peremptorily ordered all the local editors not to publish any paper without his permission. A strong protest was lodged by the journalists

against this unwarranted order, which was subsequently cancelled. The occasion for issuing such an order arose because Government had arrested several Muslim leaders and widespread agitation was threatened. The authorities did not want the people to have any news.

It is rather difficult to state the exact number of papers published at any time in the State. New papers continue to come out and many of the old ones cease publication without notice. More than a hundred papers were started since May 1932. Dozens of them had very brief spans of life and only a few have survived. According to the latest statistics there are about 40 journals existing at present in different parts of the State.

The percentage of literacy in the State is as low as 3·4. Only 19,469 know English according to the census figures of 1932. The masses are illiterate and the circle of newspaper reading public is limited. Journalism is not a paying profession as a business proposition. No capitalist has as yet dared to invest his money in this bargain. Men with no means, and mostly those who could find no employment elsewhere, have taken to journalism as an adventure. The profession has not therefore developed on healthy lines. The standard of writing is very poor. The editors usually display a remarkable lack of the sense of responsibility and are generally engaged in personal recriminations. Most of them utilise their energies solely in the disgusting game of mudslinging and muck-raking. But there are honourable exceptions.

The press of the country may be divided into two classes: the press conducted and edited by the Muslims and that by the Hindus. Till 1935, as a rule, no Hindu paper had a Muslim on its editorial staff and no Muslim journal could tolerate a Hindu as its editor. Generally speaking, even in the matter of news, the papers would until recently publish only the news of their respective communities. Of course, so far as the editorial policies are concerned, the papers are extremist in the advocacy of demands and grievances of their co-religionists. This would not be so harmful; but more often than not utter disbelief is shown about the veracity of statements made in the columns of the journals. Journalistic responsibility is cast to the winds and not much valued. Sometimes articles are written in very bad taste, and personal and private cases of individuals are discussed at length.

It is surprising that very few cases of libel and defamation are reported. One should have thought they must be numerous. Perhaps people do not take the journalists seriously.

The actual sale of the papers does not exceed a few hundred each. Some of the papers do not sell at all. They have no genuine subscribers; yet they are published, though in a miserable way.

The Hindu press is better managed than the Muslim press. Those journals which are considered to be efficiently run are conducted by Hindus. It is an irony that, while the Muslims fought for the freedom of the press, the Hindus derived the greater advantage out of it. The reasons for the superiority of Hindu

press are, firstly, that a larger percentage of the Hindus is literate, and has a wider field of newspaper-reading public; secondly, the Hindus are economically better off; thirdly, many Hindu journalists are educationally and intellectually equipped with the necessary qualifications to conduct their papers, while most of the Muslim journalists are less educated and able to understand the niceties of the profession. None of the Muslim journalists working now has had any university education.

The Government of Kashmir exerts tremendous influence and indirect pressure on the press. The Publicity Department is a faithful watchdog, which never allows any journal to enjoy substantial liberty, and when any sharp criticism, unpalatable to the Government, even though based on facts, appears in any paper, immediate action is taken to see that it is contradicted. The wishes of the Government whispered into the ears of an editor by the Head of the Publicity Department are commands that must be carried out. Even the actions of a Government official with regard to the discharge of public duties may not be adversely commented upon.

The Government maintains a record of individual newspapers. They are classified into three categories, A, B and C. Those journals which are put in the "A" list receive all kinds of Government patronage. Advertisements of various departments are sent to them for publication, for which they receive fair payment. This is the main source of income of the newspapers in Kashmir. I have mentioned some journals who have no genuine subscri-

bers and are yet published almost regularly. This is possible only because they receive income from these official advertisements. Papers in "B" list are favoured only with official communiques and press notes, while those in "C" list enjoy no privileges. It is the great desire of all the newspapers to be in "A" list, which is popularly known as the "white" list. For this they have to "behave" and they all do. It is interesting to note that the Kashmir Government denies that it maintains any white list at all.

This "A" list is an effective weapon in the hands of the Government to control the press in the present state of backwardness of the people. The Government can get anything done under the threat of displacing any paper from this list. Others not already in the "A" list do so in the hope of receiving this privilege in the near future. These lists are revised periodically. Extensive propaganda of an anti-national character was done by the Government in the past through the local press under the pressure of this threat. All communiques, big or small, of whatever nature, are expected to be published. When, however, the threat of being struck off the list proves unavailing, which is seldom the case, a security is demanded from the printer and publisher of the journal and the keeper of the press at which the journal is printed. This is an executive order and no previous judicial enquiry is necessary to issue it. Behind the back of the editor the authorities decide that a certain article or news has violated the provisions of the Press Law, and a

security is demanded forthwith. In the extreme financial difficulty from which they are suffering at present such an order proves a death warrant for the newspaper. In almost all cases in the past such demand of a security has proved fatal. Security is not demanded on such occasions alone. The District Magistrates, who have to confirm the declarations under the provisions of the press law, frequently ask applicants to deposit securities at the very start. In 1939 the District Magistrate of the Kashmir Province made it a point to see that security was demanded every time there was any change in the management of a journal. For the mere reason that the journal was to be printed at another press he ordered the printer and publisher to deposit a security. Even the journals in the "A" list had to suffer such harsh treatment. The editors bitterly complained, but to no purpose.

It must not be concluded that the Government is very fastidious in the selection of papers when framing the white list. Its only anxiety at the time is to see that all pro-Government and docile journals are chosen. It does not matter if the writings of the paper are filthy or create communal bitterness. No criterion of any standard is maintained. Some miserable rags are in the "A" list, and the worst sinners in fanning communal enmity have found a place in the privileged class. While independent papers have been mercilessly controlled and checked, this filthy stuff is not only allowed to circulate but patronised and encouraged.

The policy of the State press is mainly and largely shaped by this attitude of the Government. In the beginning the Muslim papers were bold, independent and progressive, though their tone was highly inflammatory and communal. But the Government managed to bring them under its sway. Not being efficient enough to make their concerns self-supporting, the conductors of these Muslim papers are in great need of the privileges of the white list. Though the overwhelming population of the State is Muslim, not a single Muslim journal has been able to secure a couple of private advertisements of any well-established business concern either in India or abroad. They therefore faithfully carry out the behests of the Publicity Department and are careful to see that the Government remains pleased with them. No criticism or comment on the attitude of the Government with regard to the freedom movement now appears in the Muslim press. Of course, the actions of the Government in controversial communal matters are vehemently criticised and Government is dubbed as *Hindu Raj*. For obvious reasons Government tolerates such comments and allows them to be published.

If the Muslim press is extremely moderate with regard to the Government policy, it is ferociously violent with respect to the non-Muslims. For this reason it is hostile to the nationalist movement also. The Muslim press is entirely subservient to the wishes of the middle and the upper classes. It is vastly influenced and run by them. Its

chief characteristic is the publication of statements showing the figures of Muslim and non-Muslim employees in the different departments and offices of the State. Like its patron, the upper classes, the Muslim press bluffs in the name of the Muslim masses but does not care to advocate their cause. It in no way mirrors the opinion of the poor, wretched Muslims whom it claims to represent.

The Muslim press of Kashmir has a great future before it. If some capable young men imbued with patriotic fervour and spirit of self-sacrifice come forward to take up the profession, the present position can vastly be improved upon before long.

Hindu journals of the State have mostly been reactionary and almost as communal as the Muslim ones. But they have from the very start shown a greater sense of responsibility. Some of them have greatly improved. The majority of the papers at present are owned by Hindus. All the English papers belong to them. It is remarkable that most of the papers that support the National Conference are conducted by Hindus.

Out of the 40 journals in existence at present, mention may be made of the most important ones. They are, firstly, the four Urdu Weeklies, the *Hamdard*, the *Ranbir*, the *Desh*, and the *Chand*, and the English Weekly, the *Kashmir Times*. I have already mentioned the *Ranbir* as being the oldest paper in the country. It was restarted in November 1931 with the special permission of the Government. It has maintained the reputation of being very

moderate and non-communal. But its writings are not forceful and inspiring. It generally supports the National Conference and is progressive in outlook.

The *Desh* has been started recently by Pandit Kashyap Bandhu. Every line in the paper is readable and espouses the cause of the poor and the down-trodden. Like an average educated Pandit young man this paper professes to be a socialist; but it is doubtful whether those responsible for its writings understand the essence of socialism. Still it would be unfair to ignore the effective manner in which the short stories published in the journal from week to week spread discontent with the extant social order, in which inequality of different sections and classes is conspicuous. It also contains articles in a humorous and satiric vein.

During the course of its very brief existence (it was started only last year) the *Chand* has established its reputation as a good journal. It advocates the cause of nationalism and is an enthusiastic admirer of the National Conference and its leaders.

The English weekly, the *Kashmir Times*, has not followed any consistent policy from the time of its birth. It was started in 1934 and was thoroughly reactionary in the beginning. In 1939 it came under a temporary spell of nationalism. At present it is keenly critical of the National Conference and its activities. It is, however, well-edited at present by Pandit Janki Nath Zutshi, a young, enthusiastic journalist.

The most important of these journals is the Illustrated Weekly *Hamdard*. It was started in 1935

with a definite policy and purpose. It is entirely a political journal and aggressively nationalistic. The vigorous writings of the *Hamdard* were mainly responsible for a change in Kashmir politics. The conversion of the Muslim Conference into the National Conference was also, to a large extent, the result of its consistent propaganda. The *Hamdard* is the only paper which can truly be called non-communal as it belongs neither to Hindus nor to Muslims. Hindus as well as Muslims have remained its editors in the past. It enjoys the largest circulation in the State.

In August, 1938, the *Hamdard* issued a voluminous Responsible Government Number, which was a surprising feat in Kashmir journalism. It contained messages and articles from such eminent men as Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Fenner Brockway, Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the Premiers and Presidents of the Legislatures of several British Indian Provinces and other Congress leaders, besides various politicians of the State. The District Magistrate did not permit the printer and publisher to issue the Number until he had an opportunity to read it. After he read it he objected to certain photographs that appeared in the Number and wanted these to be deleted from it. This was done in the presence of a Magistrate deputed by him. And then the Number was issued. The Government, of which the District Magistrate was a responsible officer, did not rest content with this action. It ordered the printer and publisher of the *Hamdard* and the keeper of the

press at which the Number was printed to deposit Rs. 1,500/- and Rs. 750/- respectively as securities. This could not be done as within a few days of the issue of this order, the proprietors as well as the editors and some members of the staff of the *Hamdard* were imprisoned in connection with the agitation of September 1938, and the paper had to suspend its publication. It was restarted in May 1939 when the District Magistrate ordered that a sum of Rs. 3000/- be deposited as security from the paper alone. This was the maximum that could be demanded under the Press Law.

Mention may now be made of a few less important journals. The *Martand* is the only daily paper in the State. The *Islah* is a weekly run by the Muslims of the Ahmadiya sect. It is the most popular of all Muslim papers and receives a regular subsidy from Qadian. The weekly *Amar* of Jammu is extremely communal and provincial in outlook. The weekly, *Khalid*, is a Muslim nationalist paper but not clear in its views. The weeklies, the *Sudarshan*, the *Vakil* and the *Kashmir Chronicle* (in English), are all Hindu nationalist journals, while the old weeklies, the *Pasban*, the *Albarq* and the *Rahbar** are all extreme Muslim communal papers.

Some Hindi journals were also started from time to time but they have not survived. There is however a Hindi magazine, the *Bharati*, in existence at present. There is also an Urdu magazine, the *Rattan*, for boys.

---

*Since the above was written the *Rahbar* has changed hands and is now owned by a Hindu journalist.

The future of journalism in Kashmir depends on the progress of the nationalist movement and the spread of education among the people. Geographically, politically and historically Kashmir is a separate province in a sense in which most of the Indian States situated in the very heart of British India and surrounded on all sides by British territories, are not geographically, culturally or linguistically well-defined, separate Provinces. It shall have to maintain its own independent press when India achieves freedom. The Punjab press, which at present caters for the wants of the people, shall have to make room for local papers. Some of those mentioned above have come to stay and, if they persevere, have a bright future. At present they are read by a limited number of people and circulate mostly among the middle class intelligentsia. They do not exert any effective political or popular influence. But things are rapidly changing even in static Kashmir, as we have seen, and the press will before long have its rightful place in the public life of the State.

# CHAPTER XIV

## The Freedom We Enjoy

His Highness' Government is never weary of telling the outside world that under the Dogra rule and especially during the present regime the people of Jammu and Kashmir have made tremendous progress. In season and out of season they trumpet the boons that have been gladly granted to the people from time to time by the Ruler. It is not possible to discuss and scrutinise in such a brief chapter as this all that is being claimed in this connection I shall, however, try to deal with the main points and attempt to describe the freedom that we enjoy under the present regime. Let us first discuss the constitutional aspect of the matter.

The Glancy Commission appointed for the purpose of inquiry into the grievances and demands of people finished its work in the first week of March, 1932, and forthwith a Conference met at Jammu to discuss the introduction of the constitutional reforms in accordance with the

orders of His Highness dated the 12th November, 1931. This Conference in which for the first time in the history of Kashmir representatives of all sections of people conferred about the national problem of constitutional advance, consisted of twelve non-official and two official members and was presided over by Mr. B. J. Glancy. I was one of the non-official members of this Conference. The proceedings of the Conference were carefully recorded, but as there was scarcely any unanimity among the members on the main points, Mr. Glancy made his own recommendations regarding the reforms. He recommended that "a Legislative Assembly should be established as soon as may be practicable and, subject to the final assent of His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur, the Assembly should have power to make laws." True to his imperialistic principles and the policy of the Government of India, Mr. Glancy recommended the system of separate electorates and considered joint electorates as a dangerous experiment. "It would seem a fair solution," wrote he, "that the total number of nominated members should be equal to two-thirds of the number of elected members. If these recommendations are adopted, there would be a clear majority and proportion of not less than two non-official members to one official member." Mr. Glancy also recommended some reforms in the constitution and the powers of the Municipalities in the State. But neither his recommendations regarding the establishment of Legislative Assembly nor those about the Municipal

reforms were readily accepted by the Government. While Mr. Glancy considered the demands of the progressive members of the Conference extremist, the Government itself thought Mr. Glancy's recommendations radical. But it was no easy affair to dismiss the recommendations of this august member of the Political Department of the Government of India. Dilatory tactics were therefore adopted and a Franchise Commission under the chairmanship of the late Sir Barjor Dalal was formed. Apparently the Commission had only the specific function of making recommendations about franchise; but when their report was published, it came to be known that they had dealt with the whole matter of the constitutional reform. There was to be no elected majority in the Legislative Assembly, and the powers to be enjoyed by it were much less than those recommended by Mr. Glancy.

As regards the Municipal reform, it was quietly shelved. When, subsequently, the question was raised almost in every session of the Assembly, and even bills were submitted for consideration of the House, the Government and its nominated President of the Assembly, under one pretext or another, manœuvred to keep it in abeyance.

On 22nd April, 1934, the Government published Regulation No. 1 of Sambat 1991. It was a kind of "Government of Kashmir Act" and contained the constitution and the powers of the Legislative Assembly that was ultimately granted to the people. The regulation was based on the con-

servative recommendations of the Franchise Commission.

The first Session of the Assembly met in October 1934 in Srinagar. In the course of a proclamation which His Highness made on 17th October while inaugurating it, he said :—

> "The assemblage here present this day is the outcome of labours to give outward form to our behests. It is the first of its kind in recent times ; but, of old, the duties, which you will have to perform, were duties which were always shouldered, and loyally discharged, by the praja ever since the institution of monarchy came into being in this ancient land of India. To acquaint themselves with the needs of their people the kings of old had caused to be performed, and maintained, bodies from village Panchayats up to assemblies of this nature, composed of the representatives of the various interests in their kingdoms; our own records bear witness to this."

Again :—

> "Peace and harmony are the essential conditions of progress and prosperity, and all can see that the world of the present day, after experiencing the storm and stress of unsettlement, is once again discovering the axiom that peaceful progress, even if slow, is in the long run the best, indeed, the only, way."

The Legislative Assembly, or the Praja Sabha as it has been officially named, consists of 75 members of whom 33 were elected. The Constitution permitted the asking of questions, moving of resolutions, introducing of bills and the discussion of the State Budget. No powers to spend the revenues, no control over the administration, and no substantial voice in the Government were allowed. The Army and His Highness' privy purse,

which consume more than 34 per cent of the revenue were reserved subjects entirely outside the purview of the Assembly. This could not and did not satisfy the aspirations of the people.

Subsequently, when the pressure of public opinion became irresistible, a Royal Proclamation was issued on 11th of February, 1939, the very day on which most of the signatories to the *National Demand* were released from different jails on the termination of their terms of imprisonment for *Satyagarah* of September 1938. The Proclamation commanded " the making of a constitutional advance." It was recognised in this proclamation that " the Praja Sabha had *a respectable record of legislation to its credit* and its influence on the administration by means of questions and resolutions *compares very favourably with that of similar bodies elsewhere* (italics mine). After this admission it is rather disappointing to note the reforms that were actually granted. According to the Proclamation the elected element in the House of 75 members was raised from 33 to 40. It is interesting to know who elect these seven members.

" (*a*) Two provincial seats by the Constituency of Tazimi Zemindars that is *big jagirdars* such as Rajas of Poonch and Chennani and the like.

(*b*) Two provincial seats for smaller *Jagirdars*, *muafidars* and *mukarraridars* holding a *jagir*, *muafi* or *mukarrari* from the State of not less than Rs. 500/- per annum.

(*c*) Two provincial seats for land-holders owning land, assessed to land revenue of not less than Rs. 250/- per annum.

(*d*) One seat for Pensioners receiving Rs. 100/- or more as pension per month."

This is the "elected majority" in the Praja Sabha!

According to the Proclamation the Sabha was given the right of electing a Deputy President from amongst the non-official members. Provision was also made for the appointment of non-official members as under-Secretaries to work with His Highness' Ministers and ensure closer association between the Government on the one side and the members of the Praja Sabha and the constituencies on the other. The Praja Sabha was given the right to vote on some of the demands made by the Government for Budget appropriations, as also the right of passing legislation pertaining to taxes. In their Annual Administration Report for the Sambat 1995-96, the Government claim that "His Highness the Maharaja Bahadur was pleased of *his own accord* to sanction further constitutional advance by the Proclamation issued on the 11th February, 1939." (Italics mine). If only His Highness had been surrounded by far-seeing and wise councillors and so well-advised as to grant the legitimate aspirations and remove the genuine grievances of his subjects in time the history of Kashmir would have been differently written. But in the course of our survey, we have seen that it was only when, owing to the unprecedented sacrifices rendered by the people in the gigantic Movement of 1931, no alternative was left for those who wielded the power but

to concede the demands. During the whole course of 1931 the Government made great efforts to resist the grant of constitutional reforms, and when it became evident that further resistance was dangerous, the Glancy Conference was convened to discuss the problem and make a report. The country had to undergo another period of repression and Ordinance *raj* in September 1938 to get the petty and nominal reforms announced in the Royal Proclamation of 11th February, 1939. Thus it is clear that the constitution and the reforms were wrested out of most unwilling hands. Had the Government been solicitous about the constitutional advance of the people, reforms could have been granted before 1931 and 1939 when the demand had already become irresistible.

The question now may be asked if any real advance has been granted to the people even after they have borne such indescribable hardships during the course of their struggle ? In the previous chapter I have discussed the nature of the Freedom of Press that the State's people enjoy. Now let us see the freedom of association that they are allowed.

In 1914 the Government of Kashmir passed a law to definitely define unlawful meetings and warn people of the consequences that they would have to face by participating in them. This law is called the Seditious Meetings Regulation of 1914. According to its provisions " no public meeting for the furtherance or discussion of subjects likely to cause disturbance or public excitement

or for the exhibition or distribution of any written or printed matter relating to any such subject shall be held unless (*a*) written notice of intention to hold such meeting and of the time and place of such meeting has been given to the Governor or Sub-Divisional Magistrate or the Superintendent of Police at least three days previously and (*b*) permission to hold such meeting has been obtained in writing from the Governor or the Superintendent of Police."

Any one violating this law may be arrested without warrant and shall be punished with imprisonment for a term which may extend to six months or with fine or with both. And what is a public meeting .

"A meeting may be public meeting notwithstanding that it is held in a private place and notwithstanding that admission thereto may have been restricted by ticket or otherwise."

When on the recommendations of Mr. B. J. Glancy the Government announced the grant of Freedom of Association, it was, not unjustifiably, understood that all such laws would be abrogated and become things of the past. But they were allowed to remain on the Statute Book. Strangely enough, nobody knew that the Regulation was still alive, and even the lawyers had to rub their eyes in astonishment when the Government enforced it in the Jammu city and arrested some political workers in connection with the agitation of 1938. The workers were tried and sentenced to varying terms of imprisonment.

The leaders did not believe that the Regulation could be applied. Nor did their legal advisers. The Jammu workers appealed to the Sessions Judge against the judgments of the convicting Magistrates. It is amusing to note what the appellate court said in its judgment with regard to this point :—

"Sitting at a court of justice I cannot deny that the Seditious Meetings Regulation of 1914 is still on the Statute Book and in that capacity I cannot refuse to enforce it. *If this enactment is enforced strictly it will stifle all discussion of public affairs.* There may be justification for taking this step in a limited area for a short time when the highest executive authority is satisfied that it is necessary in the interests of the public peace, *but to make this the normal feature of administration for all times places arbitrary powers in the hands of subordinate officers and Magistrates and leaves the citizens entirely at their mercy.*" (Italics mine).

But this is not all. We have already become familiar with the Regulation called 19-L which was invented for the first time in September 1931 to deal with the unprecedented rising of the masses when the Civil Administration frankly admitted its utter inability to cope with the situation.

Notification No. 19-L is a comprehensive law. According to its provisions a competent authority appointed by His Highness may "arrest without warrant any person against whom a reasonable suspicion exists that he has promoted or assisted to promote disaffection against the authority of Government or that he has acted or intends to act in a manner prejudicial to the restoration or maintenance of law and order." In making such arrests if the competent authority

is satisfied that "there are reasonable grounds for believing that any person has promoted or assisted to promote or intends to promote disaffection against the authority of Government or that he has assisted or intends to assist any disaffected persons or has otherwise acted or intends to act in a manner prejudicial to the restoration or maintenance of law or order," the authority may exile or intern such a person. A competent authority may " require any person to assist in the restoration or maintenance of law and order in such manner and within such limits as the competent authority may prescribe."

Again, "Where in the opinion of the competent authority such action is expedient to the furtherance of any operation being carried out by the military forces or the police for the maintenance or the restoration of law and order or the protection of property, such competent authority can take possession of any land or buildings together with any property thereon whether movable or immovable, including works for the supply of electricity or water or any source of water supply. He can cause any buildings, structures, trees, hedges, crops or other property of any kind to be removed and even destroy it." In fact he " can do any other act involving interference with private rights in property " under the provisions of this Notification.

And again :—

"If in the opinion of a competent authority any product, article or thing can be utilised for the public

advantage, the competent authority may by order require any owner or person in charge of such product, article or thing to place it at the disposal of Government at such time and place as may be specified in the order, and the competent authority may dispose of or use it in such manner as it may be considered expedient."

Yet again :—

"A competent authority may, by order in writing, require any person to make, in such form and within such time and to such authority as may be specified in the order, a return of any vehicles, vessels or other means of transport owned by him or in his possession or under his control."

Even traffic on roads and water-ways can be controlled.

"Where in the opinion of the competent authority such action is expedient for carrying out the purpose of this Notification such competent authority may close, divert any road, pathway or waterway or may regulate traffic over any road, pathway or waterway."

Any person who disobeyés or neglects to comply with an order made or direction or condition prescribed in accordance with the provisions of this Notification or of the rules made thereunder, the authority which made the order, gave the direction or prescribed the condition, is at full liberty to take any action as it thinks necessary to give effect thereto.

The penalty for disobeying the orders under provisions of the Notification is imprisonment which may extend to three years or flogging upto thirty stripes or fine extending to Rs. 1000/-, I have noted that in the movement of September 1931, political workers were awarded all these punishments

and the maximum number of stripes was inflicted in certain cases on their bare backs. The severe monstrosity of this law can not be overemphasised. It does not require extraordinary imagination to think what must be the condition of the people when this law is enforced and set in motion. The law-makers themselves foresaw the barbarities that could be committed by the guardians of law and order under its provisions. Having promulgated this lawless law and established a reign of terror, they did not like that the news of these atrocities should trickle out to the civilised world. Therefore the Notification allows a competent authority, "to control the operation of any State telegraph or telephone office or station in any part of the area for which he is appointed" and in particular "intercept any telegraphic or telephonic message in the course of transmission." It was found out that this control extended to the imperial telegraph office as well.

The ruthlessness with which the Notification No. 19-L was enforced in Srinagar and Shopian during the period of agitation of September 1931 has been narrated in chapter V. Under pressure of public opinion it was withdrawn by the Royal Proclamation of October 6, 1931. Nobody could imagine at that time that it would be re-enforced at some future date. It was again promulgated on June 1, 1933. And thenceforth it has been given a permanent place on the Statute Book of the Government. The Kashmir Government,

we have seen, was never pleased to grant any constitutional advance of *its own accord*, but it can be safely stated that Notification No. 19-L has been made a permanent law of the land by the Government of *their own accord*, as nobody, not even the reactionaries and privileged classes, were so unpatriotic as to demand it.

It was under the provisions of this law that hundreds of workers were arrested without warrant, and summarily tried and convicted in the National Movement of 1938. As a matter of fact, most of the signatories to the National Demand, who were imprisoned, had been charged under the provisions of this Notification, which was set in motion on the very first day of the agitation. Heavy fines were inflicted on poor volunteers, and when they expressed their inability to pay, their movable and immovable property was auctioned at nominal prices by the police.

In his presidential address at the All-India States Peoples' Conference held at Ludhiana during February 1939, Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru severely criticised the Kashmir Government for this Ordinance *raj* and termed Notification 19-L as monstrous and infamous. The State Government was annoyed at it and issued a lengthy communique justifying their action. They admitted that "both Notifications 19-L and the Seditious Meetings Regulation were on the Statute Book of the State," but added that "it would be a travesty of facts to suggest that these laws are, or have been, used by the Magistracy and the police of the State regularly

in normal times. Neither of them was used at all in putting down the two serious communal disturbances which occurred in 1937 and each of which extended over several weeks." The Government stated that the use of both these laws was forced on the authorities during the agitation in August-September 1938. In a flamboyant manner and rather shamelessly they said that "though the law permitted it, no sentence of flogging was inflicted" on the political workers.

Pandit Jawahar Lal's rejoinder was characteristic of that great champion of civil liberties. Here is it in part:

"I had stated that Notification 19-L was "monstrous." I am told it is not used in normal times and that it was not even used to put down serious communal disturbances. I entirely agree. It is not used for murderers, thieves, kidnappers, dacoits, brigands, cut-throats or other criminal scoundrels, who are tried by the ordinary law of the land. It has not been used for communal fanatics even when they stab and kill. But when political workers, desiring a political change raise their heads then it is used, and has been barbarously used and presumably will be used or else the Jammu and Kashmir Government would not keep it on.

"The law functions so long as it is on the Statute Book. The Notification 19-L is on the Statute Book and was used recently enough. The Penal Code provides the punishment of hanging for murders. It is not necessary for continuous series of hangings to take place in order to demonstrate that the Penal Code is still functioning. I repeat that the Notification 19-L is a monstrous imposition. It is bad enough that the Government should father such a monstrosity. It is worse that it should have the temerity to justify it."

This forceful rebuff silenced the Kashmir Government and they did not dare to say a word on the

subject again. But the laws continued to function. With these on the Statute Book it is not difficult to see with what irresponsibility the police officers and the subordinate executive must be working them.

It is difficult to discuss in a brief chapter all such orders as have been issued by the various officials from time to time to crush the civil liberties of the people. All these orders are not public documents. They are confidentially circulated and hardly see the light of the day. A few such circulars of a Rajput District Magistrate, Colonel Baldev Singh Pathania, which he issued in April 1939 soon after the Ludhiana Conference may be mentioned in brief.

This District Magistrate issued an order to all the revenue and police employees " to note and to intimate to the Government if any Government employee, Government pensioner, scholarship-holder, or persons in receipt of Government favour in any shape or *their relatives or friends* take part in any anti-Government activities." Anti-Government activities according to him were nothing more than ordinary political meetings and processions. In his over-enthusiasm Colonel Pathania added, " Loyalty does not constitute in merely not taking part in objectionable activities, but the times have come that all loyal persons should do propaganda for the Government and actively resist anti-Government movement."

Col. Baldev Singh admonished the jagirdars and issued the following order to them :—

" There is a large number of *jagirdars* and *muafidars* spread

in Kashmir Province. Most of them belong to Muzaffarabad district. It has been noticed that they have not been doing their duty properly. Some of them are secretly alleged to have sympathy with anti-Government Associations. Most of them do not take any active part to resist or counteract anti-Government propaganda. All *jagirdars* must be clearly told that they have to be loyal at all times. Loyalty does not begin and end with merely not taking part in the agitation or keeping aloof, but it demands them to take active steps that nothing objectionable is allowed to happen within their *jagirs*. They are also responsible to see that none of their tenants or the individuals of the *jagir* take part in anti-Government activities.

"If it is found that anti-Government meetings or demonstrations are held in jurisdiction of any *jagirdar* or any member of the family of the *jagirdar*, or his defendants or servants or tenants take any part in any anti-Government meeting or demonstration, the *jagirdar* or the *Muafidar* concerned will be held responsible."

In order to make his orders effective, Col. Pathania attempted to denude the National Movement of its sources of income. Read his oder to the petty village officials:

"It has come to my notice that some unauthorised individuals or associations try to collect subscriptions from poor zemindars. The Wazir Wazarat will please inform every village official through the Tehsildar that no one can be compelled to pay subscription to any unauthorised person or agency. The zemindars being illiterate do not realize their own benefits. If it comes to my notice that any individual is deceiving or subscriptions are realized from the zemindars by the unauthorised person or agency, the lambardar, zaildar, chowkidar, jagirdar and patwari concerned will be punished."

Colonel Baldev Singh did not rest content with this. He was determined to crush the National Movement and suppress the civil liberties of the

people. The Secretary of the States Peoples Conference in Kashmir, Pandit Mohan Kishen Tikku, was a son of one of his office clerks. This Conference was not an anti-Government body and had never been declared illegal. It was an ordinary political organisation. The Secretary is a lawyer in the local Bar. But his father was peremptorily ordered that if his son continued to be the Secretary of the Conference he would be dismissed from the Government service. The clerk is an old employee of the Government, but he was told that "the long period of his loyal and unblemished services would not stand in the way of the District Magistrate in dismissing him if he could not prevail upon his grown-up educated son" to remain a slave of the Government.* Needless to say that Mr. Mohan Kishen had to quit his post against his will.

There is no reason to disbelieve that all these orders were issued by the District Magistrate with the connivance of the Kashmir Government and, in certain cases, with their full approval.

In the press communique just mentioned the Kashmir Government had said that the national leaders had given up the agitation of September 1938 because "by their method they had forfeited all public sympathy." If anything, these fiats of the District Magistrate prove the reverse and conclusively show how desperate the authorities had become with the growing popularity of the political movement in Kashmir.

---

* These orders and circulars of the District Magistrate appeared in the press in Punjab, U.P. and Bombay. Some articles were also written on them.

These facts are enough to show the kind of freedom that people are allowed to enjoy under the present regime. The Government seizes every opportunity to tell the world that it has been large-hearted in granting constitutional advance. We are told that the country has progressed rapidly in the present regime. The record of the State Assembly about its having done any good to the people is not encouraging. The way in which the popular demands, even when supported by all the representatives really elected by the poor people, are dealt with is highly discouraging and has disillusioned many a conservative politician in the past. The perfidious manner in which the Government behaved in connection with the *Kah Charai* (Grazing) Tax is astonishing and needs a paragraph.

In a major part of the country there are no grazing grounds or pastures, yet poor peasants are made to pay the grazing tax. After making comprehensive enquiries about this matter, the Glancy Commission recommended that " the tax should be suspended in certain specified areas and action should be taken to see that the demand does not press too heavily on other parts." The tax was accordingly suspended in seven tehsils, but as regards other tehsils nothing was done. This created resentment and the elected members of the Assembly raised the point in several ways by asking questions and moving resolutions in the House. In its Session of October 1933 the Revenue Minister assured the Assembly that he would bring forth an official Bill in the next session when oppor-

tunity would be afforded to everyone to present his point of view. A Bill to amend the Grazing Tax Law was introduced in the Jammu Session in April 1936 and was referred to a Select Committee of the Assembly. A meeting of this Committee revealed that if justice was to be done and action taken in the matter, it would mean the remission of the tax to the tune of more than two lakhs of rupees. The Government was taken aback. The Revenue Minister refused to convene any further meetings of the Select Committee and dodged its members by repeatedly postponing the date from 28th August to 11th September, then to 18th September, until the Assembly was in session again. Then he brought forth an astounding motion before the Assembly to be allowed to withdraw the Bill. This was a clear case of perfidy and the elected members were upset by this unconstitutional behaviour of the Government. S. Budh Singh in a neat little speech made unanswerable indictment against the Government. Subsequently he resigned. A few days later all the members of the Muslim Conference Party followed in his footsteps. When bye-elections were held for the seats thus rendered vacant, all of these members were returned by their respective constituencies. S. Budh Singh, however, did not stand again as he had entirely lost faith in the intentions of the Government and co-operation with it.

Out of the total number of non-official Bills and Resolutions which come out successful in the ballot, the majority lapse for want of time, some are not moved and those that are moved are either de-

feated or withdrawn. This is in a nutshell the record of the work of the Praja Sabha.

And for having got this sort of Assembly we have to pay a heavy price in the shape of Notification 19-L and such orders as the District Magistrate of Kashmir issued in April 1939. Who can doubt, then, that Kashmir has made rapid constitutional advance and is enjoying a large measure of freedom !

Another "momentous reform" that has been recently introduced by the Kashmir Government is the appointment of the Board of Judicial Advisers who are to advise His Highness in the disposal of such civil and criminal appeals as may lie to him from the decisions of the High Court of Judicature and on such other matters as His Highness may choose to refer to it for advice." It is said that the establishment of this tribunal has "met a genuine demand for the satisfaction of which public opinion in the State was pressing." That not a single resolution was ever passed by any political organisation in the State nor a demand made by any community in their representation at any time for the establishment of such a tribunal is a fact. What the people wanted was that well-qualified, experienced and independent men may be appointed as judges of the High Court of Judicature. They complained against favouritism in making these appointments. They know that their civil liberties and personal freedom are in great danger if the supreme court is manned by inefficient people who are mere creatures of the Government. The Government instead of conced-

ing this legitimate demand by removing undeserving members of the High Court of Judicature, created a Superb. Body at the expense of the rate-payer. If there is an efficient and *really* independent High Court, a State like Kashmir does not need any Privy Council. It is only fair to add that quite recently a very able man has been appointed as the Chief Justice of the High Court.

No account of the present-day Kashmir will be complete without a mention of Sir N. Gopalswami Ayyangar's regime. It is too early, perhaps, to attempt a just appraisal of his work and policy; but a close observer of events cannot fail to remark his administrative acumen and efficiency. He came to an administration which had lost morale; where, as we have seen, no official, however high placed, liked to undertake the risk of using his discretion, much less initiative; where many officials of the subordinate ranks were amenable to blackmail by the gutter press and the adventurous political agitator; where, broadly speaking, the political leadership was notorious for its intransigence and journalism for its irresponsibility; where the bureaucracy was not only unsympathetic but also inefficient. In fairness to him it should be said that he has imparted strength and tone to the administration all round; that he has enhanced its morale and increased its efficiency; and, by a uniformly strong policy, told the agitator and the journalist that he meant business and he must therefore be prepared to take the consequences. But all this is negative achievement for which he cannot be given the credit of original-

ity. He has learnt the lesson well at the feet of the British bureaucrat. True, he has initiated the programmes of educational expansion and adult literacy; of veterinary service and cattle breeding, and of rural reconstruction; he has started some factories in their experimental stage; he has brought about many reforms in the working of Government offices and in the recruitment to civil services, specially so to the gazetted cadre; but, compared to the vast amount of nation-building activity that is, so to say, in arrears in our State, what he has done or attempted to do is so little. Much of the increase in the expenditure on the nation-building departments of an Indian State at the present day is a part of necessary propaganda, and Kashmir is no exception. Sir N. Gopalswami Ayyangar is certainly the most efficient Minister whose services have ever been employed in the State: but it is equally fair to say that he has come thirty years too late to Kashmir. Thirty years or more before, a Sir Gopalswami should have been eminently successful; but coming at a time when no mere bureaucratic and administrative efficiency nor even bolder nation-building activities are enough, he has not struck the imagination of the people here. Kashmir needs a man who has the imagination to envisage responsible self-Government for her people and the courage to take reasonable risks.

# CHAPTER XV

## Random Thoughts about Future

My survey of the past and the present of the Kashmir politics is complete. Let me now say a few words about the future. In the present distressing condition of the international situation, when almost everywhere politics is fluid in the world and nothing can be said with certainty about the future of any country, it is dangerous to hazard a prophecy in this direction. Still certain broad lines may be drawn without any risk of being caught into the meshes of dangerous prophecies.

It is quite evident that the Kashmir Movement will end only when real power is entirely transferred to the hands of the people and they become the masters of the land. No compromise, no half-hearted solution can finally decide the issue. At the present moment many parties claim to speak on behalf of the masses. The Government thinks that it is their natural protector and guardian and no one else can snatch that right from it. The upper classes, the *bourgeoisie* and the communalists

talk as if they are the true spokesmen of the masses and could properly represent them. But all of them are interested in these unhappy lower classes only so long as they can exploit them to their own advantage. In the course of this brief survey we have unambiguously and repeatedly found that as soon as the mass interests begin to come into conflict with the interests of the classes or the Government, the latter expose themselves and their intentions. The masses are good and worthy people so long as they remain docile and obedient. When they show any sign of independence and seriously demand their rights, they deserve no sympathy and must be crushed. And crushed they have been with a cruelty and ruthlessness that only privileged classes backed by the irresponsible Government are capable of. But whether the upper classes like it or not, and though the Government and its henchmen may do all they can to suppress it, the battle of freedom once begun can never be ended until it is finally won.

The major part of this struggle will be fought outside the State territories, with its headquarters in Wardha and Allahabad. Kashmir is not now what it was in olden times, an entity by itself which could forge its destiny quite separately and free from any outside influence. Our country is a part of that big geographical and political unit called India. Our fate is linked with that of the rest of Indians. However hard we may struggle, however rapidly we may march forward, and however quickened our pace may be, unless and until India progresses forward, we can achieve nothing substantial.

We are living under the mightiest imperialism of the world of which the local Governments are but tools. We cannot be really free so long as that imperialism remains our master. If we had to face the local authorities alone, the past events prove that by now the people of Kashmir would have achieved their end and established a Responsible Government in their land. The spontaneous mass uprising of 1931 which was caused by the rotten and most unworthy administration of those days was quelled not by the Kashmir Government but by the authority of British Imperialism. No political movement, however moral, however genuine and however well-organised, can be successful in any Indian State so long as the rulers are confident of British help. No political worker of the States can lose sight of this most important and self-evident fact. It therefore naturally follows that those workers in the Indian States who are anxious to free their people from the yoke of the irresponsible Government, should solidly support that great organisation, the Indian National Congress, which alone is breathlessly fighting to achieve *Purna Swaraj*. Fortunately this lesson was brought home to the leaders of the political movement in Kashmir when they had gone some distance on the dangerous path of communalism in the beginning. They realised their mistake and with a unique courage changed their course and came to the right track.

There is, however, a difficulty to face. India is very largely populated by Hindus and the National Congress is dominated by them. The Muslims as a

community have of late been carried away by the shibboleths of the reactionaries under the leadership of the reactionary Muslim League. Evidently the interests of the Muslims of the State, who form the overwhelming population of the country and are dominating its real and progressive politics, lie with the Congress. By siding with the Muslim League they will be committing suicide and wrecking their own cause. They will postpone the day of freedom and retard the progress of their movement. But it requires a deep insight into the nature of things, a statesmanship and large-heartedness to believe in it and abide by it. Our freedom movement is an integral part of the Congress movement in British India. The same world forces which gave birth to that movement have urged the people of the State to bestir themselves. We may not be able directly to participate in the Indian movement, but we can influence it so as to give it a shape. After all, what is the Congress movement, if not the collective desire of the people of whom we are an inalienable part?

Our movement is primarily meant to prepare the people of our part of India for the establishment of responsible Government in our motherland. We must work to that end. We must organise and make the masses politically conscious and place them on their guard against the self-seekers, opportunists and their exploiters. In this lies our great task and the essence of our movement. It is futile to believe that any real responsible Government can be achieved in Kashmir so long as British Imperialism is

a strong force in India. We may get partial reforms. Nothing more.

Kashmir is, geographically, the most important of all the Indian States. It is surrounded by high mountains which separate it from the rest of India, and on its north three empires meet. As soon as India gets freedom, Kashmir is bound to become internationally important. At present this geographical position is, however, only a source of trouble to us. The British Government can never tolerate any political disturbance on this frontier, especially when it is sponsored by elements which are hostile to their imperialistic designs and which struggle for achievement of real power. The British Government sympathised with and encouraged the political rising of 1931 to the extent that it remained communal in outlook and was backed from outside the State by its own supporters and friends. They also wanted to curry favour with the Muslims in British India who had helped them to quell the civil disobedience movement of the Congress. As soon as these ends were achieved, they withdrew their support to the Kashmir movement. Now the case is different. The Kashmir movement is no longer a communal struggle. It is becoming wholly political and economic in outlook. The British Government cannot look at it unconcerned.

Almost from the very day the British handed Kashmir over to Maharaja Gulab Singh, they have wanted it back. Its bracing climate and enchanting beauty were enough to tempt them, but its political importance made them act rather unwisely at times.

They have made unreasonable demands on the Maharaja of Kashmir from time to time and furnished proofs of the inner workings of their mind. In a meeting of the East India Association in August 1889 Mr. Edward E. Meakin is reported to have said that he had been told the following by Maharaja Ranbir Singh in 1876.

"I learned a great many things by my recent visit to Calcutta. Some of my people urged me not to go, saying that no sooner should I leave my territory than I should find myself a sort of honoured guest, something like Shah Shoojah when he visited Ranjit Singh, who would not allow him to cross the Sutlej until he had left the Koh-i-Noor behind him. They said it was an open secret that the British Government wanted to annex Kashmir, and that it was only a question of time, and skilful manoeuvring, and that I should be inveigled into allowing the first step towards the attainment of the object before I should be permitted to return to my own country."

The Maharaja added :

"I am a buffer; on one side of me there is the big train of British possessions, and whenever they push northward, they will tilt up against me : then on the other side is the shaky concern Afghanistan and on the other side of it is the ponderous train and engine called Roos. Every now and then there is a tilting of Roos towards Afghanistan and simultaneously there is a tilting upwards of the great engine in Calcutta, and I am the poor little button between them. Some day, perhaps not far distant, there will be tilting from the north and Afghanistan will smash up. Then there will be a tremendous tilt from the south and I shall be buried in the wreck and lost. It may not come in my time but it is sure to come when that poor little button is on the pin."

The shrewd Maharaja was quite correct in his estimation. His son Maharaja Partap Singh "the

little button" was virtually deposed and why? Let *Amrita Bazar Patrika* speak:

"So it will be seen that, when Sir John Gorst said that he would not be surprised if a feeble-minded man like Partap Singh would withdraw his resignation; or when Lord Cross declared that the Maharaja cruelly oppresses his subjects; or when Lord Lansdowne wrote to the Maharaja that His Highness was an extravagant and bad ruler, they were not aware of the real reasons of the Maharaja's deposition. *It was Gilgit that the Government wanted.* (Italics mine)*.

This premature exposure of the whole matter forced the British Government to give up their scheme of annexing either Gilgit or the whole of the State. But they were not discouraged and did not totally abandon the idea. They only bided their time. In the political uprising of 1931 they saw signs of their success. What could not be achieved in the days of Maharaja Partap Singh was accomplished on 1st August, 1935, when Gilgit was taken "temporarily" under their direct control by the British Government.

The people of Kashmir are not pleased with this arrangement. Writing about this change of hands the *Hamdard* of Srinagar in its issue dated the 8th of August said:—

"Not only is Kashmir known all over the world as a delightful health resort, but its geographical position has given it an importance in international politics which the European Powers and the Governments of China, Japan and Afghanistan cannot ignore easily. This is all due to the fact that Gilgit forms a part of Kashmir. English people are fully aware of it, and from the time it dawned upon the British Government

*Quoted in *Condemned Unheard.*

that Gilgit is a place "where three empires meet," they were incessantly on the look out to take possession of it. The Britishers sympathised with the political movement in Kashmir only to be able to grab Gilgit by domineering over the politics of the State. They wanted to see neither Kashmiris liberated nor the Maharaja continue as an unbridled autocrat. They wanted to bring both the ruler and ruled under their control. And this they did. Their cherished dream of occupying Gilgit materialised on the fateful day of August 1.

"The people are quite justified in their loud protestations against this transfer of a very important part of their motherland. But steeped as they are in the mire of extreme poverty themselves, their protest will prove ineffective. Of course it does not mean that the transfer has not given rise to grave doubts in their minds against the British Government's intentions and that they are unaware of the implications of this important political change. Had it been so, the Englishman would not have acted with extreme caution in this connection and would never have allowed the State flag to fly over Gilgit even now. This is all due to the pressure of public opinion. Nonetheless 1st August has been a historic day and will be remembered long."

While in the earlier times the British Government had to deal with the Maharaja alone, regarding Gilgit and Kashmir, now they cannot altogether ignore the rising nationalist opinion of the people. They do not like that the public in Kashmir should be so aroused as to become fully conscious of the real importance of their State. If the dread of Czarist Russia descending upon India through Kashmir was great in the past, the possibility of the invasion of Red Russia, whose boundaries after the inclusion of Tajdikistan and Uzbekistan in the U. S. S. R. have come very near Gilgit, are much greater. In the opinion of the British a strict watch and

supervision is therefore necessary. No nationalist movement with the object of uplifting the lower classes, the ignorant and the down-trodden, as the people of Kashmir in general and the Frontier Districts in particular are, can be looked upon with equanimity by them. This attitude of the British Government towards Kashmir politics is a tremendous difficulty for the nationalists, but they must face it patiently, wisely and cautiously. The Frontier has been an inalienable part and of utmost importance to the people of Kashmir. It is of great strategical value to us and it must remain so in time to come, of course, with the voluntary support of the people of that *illaqa*.

Another contentious problem of serious magnitude is that of provincialism. This question again and again cropped up in the course of the Dogra Rule. I think I have made it sufficiently clear in the course of this book what is at the bottom of this problem. We have seen how an invidious distinction has been created between the people of Jammu and people of Kashmir. I have mentioned the establisment of the Rajput school in Jammu before 1931. While inaugurating the first Kashmir Assembly on the 17th of October, His Highness said :—

> "For our part we declare that Divine providence having laid upon us the sacred duty to care equally for all those committed to our guardianship, we can recognise no difference between one person and another or between one class and another. They are all our beloved children whatever their persuasion or creed, and we desire to protect, foster, guide and advance them by every means in our power."

But His Highness' Government made this very Assembly pass the Arms Act which exempted the Hindu Rajputs from its provisions to the extent of their possessing one firearm per family. When the present European War began, His Highness was indiscreetly advised to issue an appeal, on 13th September, not to all his subjects between whom he knew no class distinction as befitted him, but to the "Dogras and Rajputs" only. He said:—

"Neither the Rajputs as a whole nor the other Dogras have forgotten and can ever forget their ancient traditions of chivalry and bravery, their manliness, their power of endurance and their martial qualities which cannot be requisitioned in a worthier cause."

As if people belonging to parts of the State other than Jammu neither possess these qualities nor had possessed them at any time in the past. The appeal proceeded:

"I consider myself most fortunate that Dogar the home of my forefathers continues to be a vital part of the territories which God has called upon me to administer. I am addressing myself to all Dogras, Hindu or Muslim, or of any other persusion who for centuries have lived in amity and acknowledged an unswerving allegiance to their Ruler..................Nor is this appeal confined to the Dogras who continue to reside within my State. It is equally addressed to all Dogras outside my State whom I claim as my kinsmen."

On their very face these remarks in the appeal were highly provocative to the Kashmiris and galling to those who had any sense of self-respect in them. The sensitive political workers were touched to the quick. The appeal was bitterly criticised in the nationalist press and the Anantnag Session of the National Conference, which met soon

after, rightly observed that "the appeal is apt to raise provincial and racial issues because it credits exclusively certain sections of the people of Jammu and Kashmir State with certain qualifications which are not only not peculiar to them alone but are shared with them by other sections of the people in a greater degree." The conference emphatically requested His Highness never to act so as to cause righteous indignation in the minds of the non-Dogra and non-Rajput sections of the people. The result was the Arms Act!

The appeal did raise provincial and racial issues, and the matter was frankly and comprehensively though uglily discussed in the press for many months. The problem became alive again.

The present day Jammu and Kashmir State was formed when the Treaty of Amritsar was signed in 1846 A.D., after the first Sikh War; and as a result thereof people belonging to different races, speaking different languages, professing different cultures and possessing divergent economic interests were blended together to form into one nation. It is doubtful whether this will remain so when democratic ideas are developed and have their full play. For the Kashmiris do not like to be yoked to the chariot wheels of the Dogras. They consider the Dogras alien to themselves. They have sufficient justification to feel like that. The Kashmiris say:—

"Geographically speaking, we have nothing to do with Jammu. In fact the high mountains around the beautiful valley which have served as its natural guards against outside enemies cut it off from the rest of the world.

"Linguistically speaking, we speak a different language from that which the people of Jammu speak.

"And lastly, politically, we might be equal in theory but in actual practice we are looked down upon as a conquered race or, worse still, as people who were purchased. We are not therefore trusted on positions of responsibility and are not recruited in the Army."

Kashmiris therefore want provincial autonomy. For obvious reasons the Dogras and Rajputs do not like even to envisage any kind of separation of the two provinces. The separation is, however, bound to come sooner or later unless strict impartiality is observed in treating the different people of the two provinces and all invidious distinctions against Kashmiris are withdrawn and they are allowed to enter the Army. The Indian National Congress is committed to the redistribution of provinces as soon as India is free. Kashmir will, if necessary, then narrow down to her natural boundaries which she had before 1846 and in the days when it was really independent.

Kashmiris are a virile and an intelligent race. They are capable of making supreme sacrifices for their national cause. They are hard-working, laborious and frugal. Fortitude is a trait of their character, and they can work wonderfully in most adverse circumstances. Nobody would imagine before 1931 that there would be such a gigantic and spontaneous movement in Kashmir. People everywhere held a very low opinion of our character and courage. I have mentioned the statement made before the Dalal Committee by Mr. Wakefield in which he said, "I think everybody is agreed that nobody anticipated

that a Kashmir mob would behave in the way it did, and consequently no disturbances were anticipated." It was rightly observed by the Committee that he and other officials had a contempt for the courage of Kashmiris, but that they were thoroughly disillusioned, and so was the world at large.

The main brunt of the Kashmir Movement has to be borne, as in the past, by the people of the valley. So many of them were shot dead in the year 1931 by the military, and it must be said to the credit of all those who thus laid down their lives for the national cause that not one of them ran away when the fire was opened but boldly faced it empty-handed. In no single case were the bullets found in the back of the dead bodies; they had entered the flesh on the front.

Kashmir is again seething with unrest. People feel the pangs of political thraldom, economic slavery and privations of poverty, starvation and disease. The Government is not doing all it can do to ameliorate their lot. Unemployment both among the educated young men in the towns and illiterate masses in the villages is becoming more and more acute. No well-planned scheme of industrialisation of the country is being taken up. The overwhelming population of the country who live on land are passing through a period of great misery. Before the proprietorship of land was vested in the people, about 50 per cent of the cultivable soil was in the hands of *jagirdars* and other absentee landlords. About 15 per cent more has now gone out of the hands of cultivators, with the result that the

problem of landless tenants has become serious. Any day there may be an acute agrarian trouble.

Kashmir is not only beautiful, it is a rich country. It is evident that the immense water power that is being wasted at present can be utilised in many ways to industrialise the country and add to the wealth of the nation. Another source of income is the forests with their various minor products. The valley forms a part of the belt round the world along with Rumania and Iran where petrol is in abundance. It will not be surprising if oil deposits are discovered in some parts of Kashmir.

I have mentioned that various cottage industries were a great source of income to the masses during the ages gone by. The paper industry has completely died down. The shawl industry which has been revived by the efforts of Gandhiji's All-India Spinners' Association has a vaster field. So have other cottage industries like Silk, Papier-mache, Gabba, Pattoo, Carpet, Woollens, Namdas, Furniture, Willow-works, etc.

Then there is the tourist trade. Kashmir is an ideal place for tourists. It presents the best scenes of nature. It affords all kinds of game and sport; it has a bracing climate. According to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, one of the best-travelled men, "Kashmir can well become the play-ground not only of India but of Asia."

All this can be exploited only when there is a scientific planning and a scheme of all-round development. This again is a work of a Government interested in the upliftment of the masses

and the progress of the country as a whole. The present system of administration, however well-intentioned, is incapable of doing it. This Government is responsible to a certain class of people who are in affluent circumstances and do not care what miserable lives the generality of the people have to live. The administration is carried on for the benefit of that class, and so long as they do not feel any pressure, it goes merrily on. This irresponsible Government cannot even start a substantial industrial scheme, as sometimes it professes to do, evidently because the carrying of such reforms will mean enormous expenditure of money. The main portion of the present income, as we have seen already, is appropriated either by the privy purse or by the Military and the Civil Administration. There is no possibility of any reduction in this direction, nor will any idea of such reduction be tolerated by the members of the privileged classes who enjoy this wealth. Even now any serious criticism of the largeness of the privy purse is considered unpalatable. Further taxation of the starving masses is impossible. The result is that there is no prospect of any more income. The Government can at best, therefore, carry on as it is, if it can even do that. It can manipulate things and try to deceive the world by showing small things as big in the matter of having industrialised the country and carried it on the path of progress. But in the long run it can prove to be only self-deception, as in matters economic it is not propaganda alone, however dexterously carried on,

that matters. It is facts that count.

Kashmir is an agricultural country. The chief source of income is land. During the past few years the price of grains went down. Whenever there has been any rise in the prices, the profit has accrued to the middlemen and not to the cultivator. The peasant has suffered and suffered immensely. He is on the brink of destruction. Thousands of the peasants, as I have remarked above, have sold part of the lands to pay the interests on their debts or the revenue to the Government. The Government can say, and even produce statistics to mislead the world, that the peasant has paid the dues promptly during the past seven years. But how they have managed to do so can be explained only by saying that it was possible owing to the sale of land on a large scale to the moneyed statutory agriculturist middle-class people of the towns.

"Kashmir needs a change. It deserves one. Again and again, as I was wrapped in pleasurable contemplation of Kashmir's beauty, I came back to hard earth with a shock when I saw this appalling poverty. Why should these people remain so miserably poor, I wondered, when Nature has so abundantly endowed them," observed Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru while giving his impressions about his visit to the happy valley. But this desired change cannot take place so long as the present system of Government lasts. It must go. It must be replaced not by a reformed Government but by an entirely different system of administration, one that is solely and wholly dominated by the people of the country.

What cannot be achieved in a century now can be accomplished in a very short time then.

But how can such a change be wrought ? Not by mere talk, as some of the present-day leaders seem to think. Nor can it take place merely by the success of the freedom movement in British India. The Congress struggle can help us a great deal, no doubt. It can free us from British Imperialism, but for the ultimate good and prosperity of our country we shall have to toil ourselves. We expect that, like a ripe fruit, Responsible Government will automatically fall some day into our hands. This is a ridiculous belief. The sooner we are disillusioned the better. There are innumerable difficulties in our way. Our people are backward. They are not politically conscious. Economic necessity drove them to rise spontaneously against the Government in 1931. But they do not know what is basically responsible for their poverty and starvation. We have to make them politically conscious by making them realise the injustice of the social system in which we live. They must feel that the inequalities among people which we face at every turn are not nature-born, as is the universal belief, but have been created by privileged classes who live at their expense. So long as we do not create a passionate desire of equality and demand for justice in social and political order among the masses, the desired change bringing about Responsible Government is not possible. Kashmiris must know that the wealth and the joys of life that our country produces are there for even the humblest among them. Those who have appropriated all this

common property for their own luxuries are the real enemies of the country. They have no right to this robbery. They have to be controlled and rendered innocuous.

This can easily be said rather than done. It is a huge task and requires Herculian nerves to perform it. We must have inexhaustible patience, wise statesmanship and wonderful courage. We must be cautious. Our own people can be turned against us: the very famishing masses for whom we want to fight. We should maintain our balance and remain unperturbed and calm. We must be farsighted and always keep our ultimate goal in view. We must remember that in the circumstances in which we are placed non-violence is the real and the most effective weapon which has been placed in our hands by the greatest Indian, Mahatma Gandhi, to achieve our goal. We must be non-violent both in the open and in secret, and try to have the strength to be non-violent in thought, word and deed.

The immature radicalism of certain muddle-headed young men and extremists cannot help us. We must understand that though we are fighting for the masses and the underdog, it will not be they who can prove of substantial help in the beginning. Revolution is an art. It cannot be achieved by carrying out halfbaked and raw schemes of jingo socialists. In the beginning we have to organise and fully arouse the middle classes and carry them with us. At this stage of our development it is they who can prove useful in fighting for democracy. Absolutism now

stands as a huge rock in the way of the progress and expansion of the middle classes. The selfishness of the small ruling class has alreday exasperated them and they want to get rid of their pernicious hold. We must make the best of the situation. We must rally all the middle classes under the banner of our national fight and, while never forgetting our goal, create immediately an atmosphere for the establishment of the *bourgeoisie* democracy in the country. This will bring us nearer to our object. And when the power has been wrested from the hands of the upper classes and handed over to the middle classes, we must proceed further with the scheme, broadening the bases of democracy and social and economic equality.

Kashmiri Pandits are eminently fitted to form the vanguard of this force. They are the typical middle class men, neither starving nor in affluent circumstances. They want expansion of democracy if they can be assured that it will not prove harmful for them. Pandit young men are swelling the numbers of the educated unemployed. Because of their high education and powers of organisation they can prove of immense use to the leaders of the National Movement. Owing to some unfortunate incidents, Pandits have become sullen and feel displeased with the National Conference. Muslim members of the Conference also do not trust them but think they are the enemies of the movement. This is most deplorable.

Pandits are suffering an inferiority complex. They feel that the masses being Muslim can only be organised and led by Muslim workers. This is wrong. Muslim workers have one community of interest with the masses, that of religion, which is sentimental and changeable. Our relations with the masses are eternal and deep-rooted. We belong to the same race and have the same blood in our veins. If Pandit young men sincerely go to the country-side to serve the masses, there is no reason why they cannot organise and lead them. What in reality is the cause of the inferiority complex is that we are ourselves communal in outlook and have a middle class mentality. Our nationalism is skin-deep, and as soon as a Muslim middle class communalist offers the slightest provocation, the bubble is pricked and we come out in our true colours. That is the genesis of our weakness. If we are true patriots and really above communalism, we are destined leaders of Kashmir, at any rate in the near future, however premature it may be to say what attitude Pandits will ultimately adopt when masses become fully conscious and powerful enough to take the work of Government into their hands.

No attention whatsoever has been paid to eradicate the degrading social abuses which are sapping the vitality of the masses. Illiteracy is rampant. Muslim villagers are *mullah*-ridden and the *mullahs* do not want to loosen their grip. Progress is impossible so long as these preachers and *waizes* are not publicly denounced as the worst obstacles

to progress. Women are barbarously treated. Their life is a stone-mill round the neck of the nation. They are suffering from innumerable diseases. Their ignorance, social thraldom and subjection are looked upon as virtues. Most o them, particularly those belonging to the upper and the middle classes, have to move, outside their homes, if at all, under a veil—that great impediment in the way of their spiritual and physical development. As a rule our people are unclean and dirty. We talk so much about the gifts of nature which abound in our land, but have not had the wisdom to utilise the commonest of these gifts, *i.e.*, water to remove dirt. Obviously Muslim workers can immediately prove of greater use in this field than their Hindu colleagues. But Kashmiri Pandits can eminently perform the task of carrying the torch of literacy to every corner of the State. Educated unemployed young men with patriotic feelings can become teachers on small wages, and a net-work of national schools can be spread all over the country.

We have complained so much against the unsympathetic attitude of the Government, but we can not reasonably deny that we are ourselves at fault in many respects. We could advise a programme of social reform and adopt it. We could build a constructive side to our movement. Mere passing of resolutions and delivering of speeches cannot lead us far.

We have inherited a magnificent past with our old culture and literature. No national movement worthy of its name can ignore it. Poli-

tics has made the people of Kashmir blind to their ancestral heritage. Muslims think that they have nothing to do with the greatness we achieved during the Hindu period, and Hindus would like, if they could, to delete that portion of history which begins with the first Muslim ruler of Kashmir and ends in 1846. If a dispassionate mind is brought to study the problem, it will be seen that this attitude is unnationalistic and unedifying. We must feel proud of our ancestors and redeem their memory from the mist of the past. The stature that our prodigious ancesters had added to our greatness by their intelluctual productions is of as great importance to us as the natural beauty of our motherland. Man does not live by bread alone. Our movement is not only for our economic and political advancement ; it is for our cultural progress as well. And no cultural revival can minimise the usefulness of our old heritage.

Kashmir needs a leader with great qualities and immense capability. Like Kemal Ataturk he must be bold to face the *mullah* and introduce social reform of a revolutionary character. Like Riza Shah, he must be endowed with a passionate patriotic zeal and must be a believer in the greatness and glory of the past of his motherland. Like Zaglul, he must deal liberally with the minorities of his country. Such a hero is destined to appear on the scene, and the forces of nature are bound to throw him up on the surface to lead the needy masses. When he will appear no one can say. I believe that,

for obvious reasons, he must be born. I have cherished this belief all these many years. It may ultimately prove an obsession ; who knows ? But in the hope that a great future awaits us and our country, that the political and economic and social uplift of our country-men is an ideal worth striving for, let us work calmly, quietly, but incessantly and in scorn of all difficulties and privations.

## Epilogue

Thus have I said what others also felt
But would not say, or could not. Truth may wound,
Although I never meant it should. But if
By some unconscious error I have caused
One smart, I crave forgiveness on my knees :
Untruth must die and truth prevail at last.

THE END